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STRENGTH FROM MAY.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

Far down the deep valley, far up the high mountain,
Each spot with its rustling green trees and fresh fountain:
Young May with her blue eyes large welcome is glowing,
And longs for our songs to be with her own flowing.

Come, dear wife and children—come join in her singing;
See round us the birds in their wed rapture winging;
Behold the mist incense from torrents ascending,
And over us God's love in blue heaven bending.

That Father has given us home altars holy,
But not there should gratitude worship Him wholly;
All Nature is given us, and hearths of ours
Will better and sweeter be from gathered flowers.

Come, wife, for a day, from old circle of duty;
Come, children, and innocent beauty give beauty:
To mind and to heart, will the valley and mountain
Give new strength for duty, from tree, bird and fountain.

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER III.

FATE PLAYS INTO MRS. BLAKE'S HANDS.

It was unusually late when Mrs. Müller returned from the village. She was a ruddy, shrewd looking woman, who seemed to take life comfortably, and she came in smiling, with the confidence that she was the bearer of something her employer would be glad to receive.

"I called at the post-office, ma'am, and here is a letter for you and a magazine for Miss Hester. I minded that you've been anxious about letters lately, so I went out of my way to ask for them."

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness," replied Mrs. Blake, as she took the missive and glanced at the direction without opening it. "You have been away a long time, Mrs. Müller. Was there anything of interest going on in the village?"

"The whole place was astir, ma'am, with the news of a dreadful railroad accident. A bridge gave way under the train, and several cars filled with passengers went down. It was only four miles from town, and everybody that could get away has gone out to help bring in the wounded. They say that many were killed outright."

Both her auditors grew pale, and shuddered at the picture her words conjured up. Hester said:

"The first account of such things is always exaggerated, and no doubt this has been represented as much worse than it really is. I am glad, though, that we were not looking for any one on the train."

A sudden fear seemed to move her mother at these words, and she hurriedly opened her letter and glanced over the few lines it contained.

"It was a narrow escape," she muttered inaudibly. "A day later, and he would have been among that crowd of unfortunates—perhaps done to death by the carelessness of a bridge inspector."

Mrs. Müller was dilating on the news with all the gusto of a person who rarely hears anything exciting, and Hester was listening with a degree of interest she seldom vouchsafed to anything in which she was not personally concerned.

The woman wound up by saying:

"I saw Dr. Macon, Miss Hester, a going off in a hurry to help the wounded. He had his box of instruments with him, and he told me to tell Mrs. Blake that he would not come out to tea this evening, as he had promised.

"I am sorry for the poor people who need his help, but I can't say that I am in despair because Æsculapius is prevented from coming," said the young girl lightly. "You will be spared the trouble of making his favorite cakes for tea, Mrs. Müller."

"That reminds me that it is time for me to be putting the kettle on. I will give you something nice, Miss Hester, even if the doctor does not come."

"To console me for his absence, I suppose. Well, I shall accept the substitute, and enjoy it more, perhaps, than I should the society of my adorer."

"Oh, Miss, do you speak so of the man that loves the very ground your feet treads on? If you play the coquette with him, I believe it will break his heart outright."

"You talk of his heart as if it was glass, or china. For my part, I don't think it is of such brittle material: it will bear a good many hard thrusts without coming to much grief. Luckily for him, Dr. Macon is not one of the sentimental order."

Mrs. Müller shook her head doubtfully.

"There's no knowing, Miss, what a man is till he's tried. I believe myself that the doctor would do anything desperate for your sake, if you asked him to."

"Ah, well, I don't think that I shall try him that far, Mrs. Müller. In these prosaic days, lovers are not asked to perform desperate feats, as the knights errant of the chivalrous age were expected to do. I am very glad, for my part, that I live in modern times, and I am inglorious enough to think it better for a man to be a healer of wounds than their inflicter."

"Then the doctor may have some chance with you, after all," said Mrs. Müller slyly.

Hester suddenly assumed her princess air, and threw the familiar "help" to such a distance, that she wondered how she had dared to express herself so freely. She coldly said:

"When I have made my matrimonial arrangements, Mrs. Müller, I promise to give you due warning, that you may not lose the enviable distinction of village bulletin. I must put up my hair now, and complete my toilet."

"And I must look after my supper," replied the woman, feeling aggrieved and discomfited. She went away, muttering to herself:

"I might ha' knowed that she'd put on her dignity, and come down on me at last. That's just her way: to be familiar one minute, and grand as if she was a queen the next. I wouldn't put up with it, if the wages wasn't extra, and work given to both Hans and me on the place."

When Hester heard the door of the kitchen closed after the housekeeper, as Mrs. Müller was called, she turned sharply to her mother, and asked:

"Who is your letter from? You seemed excited when you opened it."

"Yes, for I saw that it was from your father, and I feared he might be on that train. I knew he would come, and he writes a few lines to say that to-morrow he will pass this place on his way from Cape May with his daughter Estelle. He intends to go on to New York with her, and leave her with some friends; he returns here the next day for a few hours, that he may see you, and prove to you that he has not forgotten your claims upon him. But he requires me to make no effort to enter his presence, or to speak with him."

"Of course, after all that has happened, you can have as little wish to meet him as he has to encounter you. If he *had* been on that train—if he had been among the fatally injured—would it have been of vital moment to us?"

"It would be ruin, for he has made no formal settlement on you or me. When I was sent away in disgrace, he would only consent to allow me the income he promised, on the condition that I made no attempt to return to Louisiana. If it had been mine to do as I pleased with, I could have defied him: for he could have proved nothing against me, even if he could have brought himself to have me arraigned for the crime of which he accused me."

"You had nothing to gain by going back, and you ought to have made such concessions as would have secured your own interests, and *mine*. If he had died in all these years, and made no certain provision for us, what would have become of you and me? I shudder when I think of that possibility."

"He may have done so; but I am under the impression that he has deferred making any permanent settlement till the present time. If you play your game with tact, Hester, you may yet wile from him such a dower as will reconcile me to the refusal I foresee that you intend to give Dr. Macon."

"Dr. Macon, indeed! A man that can't see beyond the tip of his own nose without the aid of his glasses, is not the ideal lover any girl would choose. I shall fascinate my father, and make him think me worthy to be endowed with fifty, or perhaps a hundred thousand. With such a fortune as that I can hold up my head among the best; and if he does not give it to me, it will be the worse for him."

"Don't utter idle threats, Hester. You will not be called on to put them into execution; for he will be sure to buy you up, and all my wrongs will be condoned or forgotten."

Hester coolly said:

"I think you have already avenged them, *Madame mère*. I felt very savage over portions of your story, but it seems to me that you knew how to pay back wrong for wrong. As I have said, I don't blame you for what you did, for you had provocation enough; and with the hope of winning back the man you loved so much, you had sufficient motive for getting rid of your pale-faced rival. It was unfortunate that you misjudged the man you had to deal with, for you committed a crime which was of no avail, and which only bore bitter fruit to yourself."

There was something terrible in the composure with which this young creature discussed the dreadful revelation that had been made to her. The hardness of her nature, the utter lack of principle, was apparent in both words and manner. Miss Cranston was right in her judgment: temptation was only wanting to make this girl ruthless as Lucretia Borgia, and it was on its way to her now in a form that would be most acceptable both to herself and her mother.

The knowledge of who her father was had been carefully guarded from Hester until this day, for reasons Mrs. Blake would have found it difficult to explain.

She had moulded the ductile nature of her child to suit her own purposes, in the hope that the opportunity might arise to use her against the man toward whom she now cherished the bitterest animosity. "There is no fury like a woman scorned," has with truth been said, and this woman loathed the memory of those days in which she had thrown herself in the dust at the feet of a man who, at the best, had only tolerated her. She had received little moral training herself, and the bias she gave her daughter's mind was naturally a reflection of her own. Her fate had been a hard and bitter one, and she thought the wrongs she had suffered gave her the right to war against those through whose instrumentality they had been inflicted. She felt no remorse for the crime she had committed; no pallid face haunted her pillow; she only thought, with a kind of vindictive joy, of the two fair rivals who lay in their narrow bed beneath the sultry southern sun, while he who had elevated them to the place she thought she had the best right to fill was left desolate, and as much alone as herself. "Sin shall bear its bitter fruit:" to her its punishment had come in desertion, and indifference on the part of the idol she had set up for worship, but it had not brought repentance with it.

Mrs. Blake said:

"It is easy for you to talk so lightly of sufferings you have not been called on to bear. A tithe of the indignities I have endured would have set you wild, and have made you a more bitter scourge to him who inflicted them, than ever I have been to him who deserted me. You have no softness in your nature; I had, till it was crushed out of me by the cruel experience through which I have passed. Once I could feel sympathy and compassion; but that was long ago. I have brooded over my wrongs till every emotion is dead within me, save the yearning desire to strike a deadly blow at the heart that gave so fatal a stab to mine."

"If I am hard, I owe it to your training," said Hester; "and you should not reproach me with the very result you have labored to bring about. You might have concealed from me all that blighting past, and have reared me, as my father wished, in innocence and peace; but you elected to confide to me that which you knew would imbitter me against him, and make me a warm partisan of your own. I am what you have trained me to be, so do not quarrel with your own work."

"I am not quarrelling with it; but I find it imperfectly done, since you are ready to be bought up by your father, and if sufficient gold is offered you, to bury beneath it all memory of my wrongs."

"What can I do but accept fortune at his hands, if he comes hither to offer such a boon to me? You are very unreasonable; you counsel me to win from him all I can get, and then find fault with me for accepting your advice. We are entirely at my father's mercy till some positive settlement has been made upon us; and if I espouse your cause, and let him see that I have done so, there is little chance of gaining more than the pittance on which we have so long managed to exist."

"That is true," said her mother, in a low tone; "but after you have seen him, Hester—after he has done for you all that he is willing to do—you can choose your own course. Something tells me that I shall yet have Armand Landry in my power, and if I do, you must help me to pay him back for all that bitter past. Say that you will do that, and I shall be satisfied."

"You may safely count on me for that, I think. He comes hither to cancel a debt he owes me: I accept his money as my right; but, after all, he will not make me equal in fortune with his younger children. From his abundance he condescends to provide for me; but the utmost he will give me will be but a tithe of that which they will inherit. My natural claim on him is as strong as theirs, yet he will think himself more than just if he lifts me above dependence on my own exertions. Perhaps I ought to be grateful for that—as I am the daughter of a woman who lent herself to such a deception as was practised against him; but I am *not* grateful. I shall accept what he chooses to give me, but I do not intend to sell my allegiance to you for what he may offer me. I am *your* child—you have formed me, tutored me to attain some end of your own, and if you ever gain that power of which you spoke just now, you have only to command, and I will obey your behest, if it is possible to do so."

Mrs. Blake held out her hand, and grasping that of her daughter firmly, spoke in a low, fierce tone:

"That is sufficient, Hester. I understand you now, and I trust you. The time will come; remember that. I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence. My dreams were always significant, and in one I had last night I saw Armand Landry kneeling at my feet imploring for mercy at my hands. Ah, it was sweet, even in a dream, to have that man in my power!"

Hester regarded her curiously. Mrs. Blake's eyes, of that deep, rayless black which seems to absorb light only to emit it, at intervals of intense excitement, in flashes of fire, were blazing now with the passion the recital of her story had gradually kindled. Her face was almost convulsed, and every shade of color had died out of it.

The girl asked:

"What would you do with him, if such an improbable thing came to pass?"

"I would *crush him as I do this*," was the reply, and as she spoke she closed her hand on a rose which she had been mechanically twisting in her fingers throughout the interview with her daughter. She uttered a faint cry, and threw the crushed flower from her, for an insect which had hidden itself among the leaves had stung her severely, as it felt the pressure of her iron clutch. Hester coolly took from the dressing-stand a bottle of hartshorn, and said, as she applied it to the injured spot:

"That is intended as a warning to you not to undertake more than you can accomplish. It is not likely that such power over my father will ever be yours; but if such a thing should happen, it would not be well for you to proceed to extremes."

"Ah, well, wait till the time comes, and I will see how far I may safely go," said her mother, with sudden calmness. "There, that will do; the pain is quite relieved. Complete your toilet, Hester, while I make some change in my own. Dr. Macon will be sure to be with us before the evening is over, for to-night you are to give him your final answer. He is a man of ability in his profession, for he is as far-sighted mentally as he is short-sighted physically. If you could only fancy him, it might be safer for you to marry him; and with the fortune your father can give you, you might induce him to remove to a larger place where you would find society more to your taste."

Hester shook her head decisively.

"I can make a better use of my father's bounty than to buy with it a man who is distasteful to me in many respects. I hate to give up an adoring slave such as the doctor has been to me for two years past, but since the alternative is to marry him or to let him go, I must do the last."

Mrs. Blake said, with a half sigh:

"Then we may make up our minds to leave this place, for we shall no longer be safe. Dr. Macon will consider himself ill-used, after the encouragement you have given him. He is subtle and keen enough to seek out our antecedents, and he will have no scruple in making them known, if he has no interest in concealment. If it were known here that I am a cast-off wife, with a suspicion of guilt clinging to me, we should be remorselessly dropped, and the story would follow us wherever we might go."

"Then we will leave before he has found out anything," replied Hester composedly. "In Europe, with a handsome fortune, I could, with my beauty, make a brilliant marriage, and we will go there. I intend boldly to ask my father to give me enough to enable us to do so, and I am certain he will not refuse me. I may become Madame la Baronne, or Madame la Marquise even, while my wealthier sisters are only plain Mrs. this or that. That reminds me, mother, of the possibility that one of them will marry the lad I used to be so fond of when I was a child. Raymond Delorme would be a suitable match for one of Mr. Landry's coheiresses, though I, the eldest born, would be considered too far beneath him even to be thought of. Ah, earth could hold no brighter fate for any woman than to be the chosen one of such a man as I am sure Raymond has developed into."

Mrs. Blake coldly replied:

"Yes; Raymond was a fine lad, and he liked you very well as a child. He would come to Le Bocage in spite of his mother, for I know that she tried to prevent him from doing so. She was a proud Puritan, originally from Boston, and she did not think you good enough to touch the hem of her son's garment. He was a winsome lad, and I do not wonder that you remember him so kindly. But you will never be thrown in contact with him again, Hester; there is a gulf between you that may never be bridged, and I have no doubt he has transferred his childish preference for you to the sister who so strikingly resembles you. I fancy that it is to his mother's family Estelle Landry is now going on a visit, and it is more than likely that she is already the betrothed of Raymond. He has been at Yale, and the distance between New Haven and Newport is not very great. I think that her father and his mother would both be delighted with such a match."

"Very likely," said Hester dryly, "but if I only had the chance afforded me, I would make an effort to mar it. There is no reason why my younger sister should take everything—position, larger wealth, and also the man who in his boyhood loved me best of all. I should like to meet Raymond again; if I did, it would go hard with me if I did not successfully throw my spell upon him and bring him to my feet. But then he could not offer me the title I may chance to win in my foreign travels. I shall fix my ambition on that, *Madame Mère*; but in the mean time I will render myself as bewitching as possible, that Dr. Macon may be in despair at the prospect of losing me."

Mrs. Blake arose and left the room, and Hester commenced her toilet.

She placed herself in front of the mirror, and arranged the luxuriant masses of her waving hair in a peculiar and picturesque manner which was very becoming to her. She put on a rose colored muslin, made low in the boddice, and with short sleeves. A lace cape covered her shoulders, without concealing the beauty it was only designed to vail; this was fastened in front with a knot of pink ribbon, with long flowing ends; and in her hair, bows of the same were placed, which harmonized with her clear, dark complexion. The rounded arms were left bare, with no ornament save a pair of gold bracelets made in the form of serpents, with ruby eyes and enamelled heads. Hester had selected them herself from the stock of a travelling jeweller, though most women would have shrunk from wearing them.

She glanced at her image reflected in the mirror with an expression of satisfaction, and tossing her head, said aloud:

"I wonder what Raymond would say if he could see me now. I had almost ceased to think of him; but if he is going to marry Estelle, I shall begin to dream of him again, and to envy her more deeply than ever the position that should of right have been my own. Why could not Armand Landry have been true to my mother, when she loved him so? He would have been, if she had really been the choice of his heart; but she was right, he never truly loved her; yet I cannot see why. She must have been a very handsome woman, and she could have won as good a man as he, no doubt. But what is the use of such speculations now? Fate is too strong for the most of us, and hers was too cruel to be thought of without a shudder. What is mine to be, I wonder? Something better than hers was, if the man who proved her evil genius can control it. Well, I am his daughter, and I suppose he has some parental feeling for me. He will do what he can for me, and I must be satisfied; but if I could take the place of Estelle, ah, then the future would be something worth anticipating. But I can never do that, so what is the use of thinking of so impossible a thing?"

She strolled out on the lawn, and threw herself on a rustic seat placed beneath a towering elm, and gave herself up to thought. She arranged in her own mind all she would say in the interview on which she believed so much for her depended, and tried to imagine what her father would reply. She was so much preoccupied that she did not hear the tea bell till it had been rung thrice, and she went in reluctantly to join her mother at the table.

When Mrs. Blake retired to her own apartment on leaving that of her daughter, she threw herself upon her sofa, and gave the reins to all the vindictive feelings which had been aroused in her heart by the positive injunction given her to avoid coming in contact with the expected visitor. She fiercely thought:

"He might have left that to my own sense of propriety. Does he think that I care enough for him *now*, to induce me to thrust myself before him that I may look on him once more? Bah! he must have little knowledge of woman's nature, if he fancies that any other feeling than bitterness is left in my heart for the man who deserted me for another. O for the power to pay him back for all he has made me suffer! I have given him one blow, but I would deal him another—and another, and another! If I could strike him through the children he has placed so far above my child, I would do it—yes, I would—I *would*. If Ellinor Russell's daughter could be only turned over to my tender mercies, would I not make *her* pay the penalty of her mother's wrong toward me? Others may think, that in compassing my rival's death I received sufficient atonement, but *I* do not think so. Ah! how I wish that I could lay my hand upon that girl's fate, and mould it to suit myself! Through *her* I would pay him back every pang he has made me suffer. But such a thing as that is impossible. He will take good care that I shall never have the chance to approach the treasured darlings he values so far above the child I gave him. Hester is beautiful, gifted, brilliant as they; yet she may never claim the position which she would know how to fill so well."

Mrs. Müller here put her head in at the open door, and said:

"Please, ma'am, tea will be served in a few minutes, and I thought I would look in and see if you were ready for it."

With some effort Mrs. Blake forced her mind to comprehend the words of her factotum, and she languidly said:

"Very well; I will get up and arrange my dress."

She arose, smoothed her black hair, in which many threads of silver glistened, and gazed a few moments on the reflection of her faded face, as she muttered:

"Armand's prohibition was superfluous, for I would scarcely be willing to let him see how much I have changed since we last met."

She always wore black, with plain collar and cuffs, and such alteration as she wished to make in her toilet was soon effected. She joined her daughter as she came in from the garden, and went with her to the supper they scarcely tasted.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. MACON'S PLOT.

Two hours later, the guest Mrs. Blake and her daughter were expecting was walking rapidly in the direction of the Elms, as their home was called.

Dr. Macon was a tall and rather ungainly looking man, about twenty-eight or thirty

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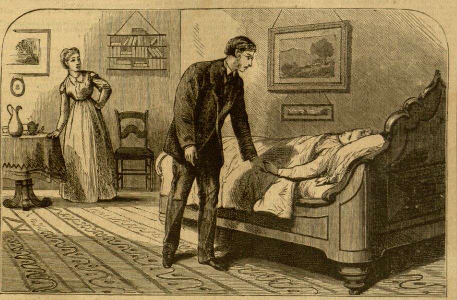

DOCTOR MACON VISITING THE DAUGHTER OF ARMAND LANDRY.

years of age. His step was quick and alert, though his motions were ungraceful, and he had the air of a man who is vividly alive to everything that is passing around him. His quick glances darted on every side through the glasses to which Hester had so contemptuously alluded, though his mind was filled with thoughts of something he had surreptitiously learned that afternoon, and he knew that he had possessed himself of the clue to the mystery which enshrouded the history of the woman whose daughter he had asked to become his wife.

His face was shrewd and thoughtful, but not prepossessing; his features were somewhat of the Jewish type, though his complexion was fair, and his hair and whiskers of a sandy hue. He was not a man to win either confidence or affection, for his sharpness repelled the first, and his want of personal attractions was, with him, a fatal bar to the last. Many ugly men have been loved with a depth and intensity of passion which their handsomer rivals failed to inspire; but those men were gifted with eloquence, to which Macon had no claim. He talked well and intelligently on almost any subject, but he lacked the fire, the vividness of expression, which women most highly appreciate, and he was regarded by them as an agreeable companion, but never as an interesting one.

It had been Dr. Macon's destiny to reach mature manhood without feeling a preference for any woman, and his friends had set him down as a predestined bachelor before he reached his twenty-fifth year. He only laughed in reply to their raillery, and said—with more truth than he thought:

"Wait till the right woman comes across my path, and I shall make up for former coldness by adoring her with a sort of desperation."

He spoke in jest, for he believed himself invulnerable to the shafts of Cupid; but the time came in which he found, to his own astonishment, that he was ready to do or dare anything to secure the possession of one of Eve's daughters.

Three years before the present time, Macon had removed to Blanton, and been taken into partnership in the practice of his profession by an old physician who was anxious to retire from its active duties. He soon made himself popular, and proved that he was skillful in his calling.

A few months later he was called in to attend Mrs. Blake through a severe attack of fever, and by her sick-bed he made the acquaintance of her daughter.

How or why this girl attracted him so powerfully he could never have explained; but she speedily became to him the one desire of his heart, and he would have made any sacrifice to win her consent to become his wife. She was a consummate coquette, and she played with his affections in the most capricious manner, alternately encouraging and repelling him, till at times the lately staid and sober man was almost beside himself with doubt and jealousy.

Her mother espoused his cause, and with Mrs. Blake for an ally, Macon hoped that his suit would eventually be successful. So abject was his devotion to his fascinating idol, that he was willing to accept her consent to become his own, even if it was won through the influence of her mother.

For more than two years he had been held in suspense, but the last time he had visited the Elms he pressed for an answer to his proposal, and it had been promised him to-night. He was now on his way to ascertain his fate, and the events of the last few hours, he thought, had given him a hold on the mother and daughter, which he would have little scruple in using. Macon was not a high-toned or generous man, as Mrs. Blake had discovered; yet she was anxious for a union between him and her daughter, because she thought it would be better for Hester to claim as her protector one so devoted to her, than to follow her own fancies, and perhaps make as great a wreck of her life as she herself had done.

In the afternoon Macon had ridden out to the cottage, and hearing the mother and daughter speaking confidentially together, as he drew near the house on foot, he had crouched beneath the window, and heard all that passed between them.

Hurrying away before he was discovered, he arrived in town in time to hear of the railroad accident, and went at once to the scene of the disaster. It is not my purpose to describe the horrors he witnessed on that fatal spot. Every assistance that was possible was rendered to the unfortunate sufferers, and many of them were brought to the village to be attended to there. But among the severely injured were a gentleman and his daughter, who were in too precarious a condition to be removed. Fortunately there was a farmhouse near, to which they had been taken, and Dr. Macon had remained with them, using all his skill in their service till he was able to leave them in comparative ease and comfort.

The gentleman had received severe internal injuries, from which the physician knew there was no hope of recovery, and his right hand and arm had been terribly crushed. The young girl had been struck on the head, and she lay senseless for more than an hour after she was placed in bed. When she at length regained consciousness, she looked around in a wild, bewildered way, and rambled on in her words in such a manner as showed Macon that the shock to her brain threatened serious results.

The doctor examined this patient with more than ordinary interest, for in her he beheld the exact counterpart of the girl he so absorbingly loved. It seemed to him strange, and almost incredible, that so perfect a likeness between two persons could exist. They were of the same size, eyes, hair, complexion; even the shape of the hands were identical; and when the power of speech was restored to her, the tones of her voice sounded in his ears as an echo of that which had become the music of his life.

Macon applied himself with zeal to the examination of the injuries she had received, and he hastened to apply such remedies as he considered necessary. With some regret, he severed the long shining tresses from her head, and ordered ice to be applied to it. In reply to the questions of Mrs. Brown, the farmer's wife, he gravely said:

"She may recover rapidly, for youth and a strong constitution are in her favor; but I am afraid that it will be a long time before she is exactly right again. Such a blow as she has received would render some persons *non compos* for life. I hope it won't be so with her, poor girl, for she is young and fair, and her life lay all before her. I have done all that I can for her at present, Mrs. Brown, and I must leave her to your care till the morning. Then I think I can bring a nurse to look after her, who will be more interested in her recovery than either you or I."

"I'll do the best I can, Doctor; but do you know anything about these people? The gal 'minds me o' somebody I've seen, but I can't exactly make out who it is. Have they any kin about here?"

"I should not be surprised if they have, but I am not quite certain. The lady I refer to will come hither, whether she turns out to be related or not. Do the best you can for a few hours, and I will come back myself by eleven o'clock to sit up with the gentleman. I shall leave my student, young Simcox, to look after him till my return, for he is not in a condition to be left alone for a moment."

After giving some directions, Macon went into the adjoining room, in which lay a tall and stately man in the meridian of his days, crushed and mangled in so fearful a manner that every breath he drew was torture to him. His face and head had escaped injury, and the statuesque beauty of his features was more conspicuous from the marble pallor that had settled upon them. It was a grand and noble head, crowned by black curling hair thickly sprinkled with silver.

As Macon drew near him, he unclosed his eyes, and faintly asked:

"How is my daughter? I heard her voice just now. She is not severely hurt, I hope, Doctor?"

"Set your fears at rest concerning her, sir. She is bruised, and her head received a sharp blow, but I hope that all will be right in a few days."

"Thank God for that assurance. I can bear my own sufferings, if I know that she is certain to recover."

"I think you need have no doubt on that score, sir. She will be feverish and delirious for a few days, but I hope that care and skill may restore her to you bright and sound as before this accident."

"She may be restored to herself, but never to me, for I shall have passed away before her mind has regained its clearness. It is most unfortunate that it is so, for I had much to confide to her that is of vital importance to herself and—and to others—"

His voice sunk away in a faint whisper, and the physician bent his head to catch the last words. He tried to speak cheerfully as he said:

"You must not take so gloomy a view of your own condition, sir. You have great vital force, and a reaction may take place in time to—"

"Don't talk professional nonsense, Doctor," interrupted the patient almost sharply; "and above all, don't attempt to deceive a doomed man. Death is approaching me with giant strides, and you know it, yet you are willing to hold out a fallacious hope to me. Tell me the truth. How many hours have I to live? Are the last sands ebbing from the glass, or will it be turned yet a few times more before the end comes?"

Thus brusquely addressed, Dr. Macon briefly replied:

"You may live forty-eight hours, but the chances are that in half the time your sufferings will be at an end. I have given you the truth now, as concisely as you asked for it."

"And I am obliged to you for telling it to me. I am not afraid to die. I have been a good son of mother church from my youth up, and with one exception I have done the work set for me faithfully and well. It is a hard fate to be cut off in the midst of life, when I am so necessary to others; but it is the will of God, and He will care for those I leave behind me. Is there a Catholic priest in the village from which you came?"

Macon smiled, sad as the situation was.

"I can bring you a clergyman of almost any other denomination, but there is no Catholic church near, and of course no priest."

In a faint voice the dying man said:

"It would be a great blessing to me, in my present circumstances, if I could secure the attendance and services of a confessor. Could not a priest be found and brought hither before my senses fail me?"

"New York is the nearest point at which there would be certainty of finding one. If you wish it, I will write to that place, and get one here as quickly as possible. He may be with you in time, but it is very doubtful."

"And by the time he could get to me I should not be in a condition to attend to anything. It will hardly be worth while to send, I am afraid. What I have to say to him concerns the safety of the living, more than the eternal welfare of my own soul, and it will be useless for him to be summoned only to find me senseless or speechless."

All this had been spoken with extreme effort, and with many interruptions, and he now turned his pallid face from the eager gaze that rested on him, and seemed to be lost in thoughts of so painful a nature that his physical sufferings were forgotten.

"This man is the father of Hester Blake, and the girl in the other room is her sister," was the mental comment of Macon, as he noted the resemblance between the patient and the two young women. "With the clue I gained this afternoon it is not difficult to settle the relationship."

He cleared his throat, and after a pause, said:

"If I can be of any use to you, sir, I shall be very happy to serve you. The woman of the house and my student, who will be here presently, can testify to you that I am a man to be trusted."

The pale face was turned toward him again, and the large dark eyes eagerly scanned him. The survey did not seem to afford the stranger much satisfaction, for he sighed heavily, and presently said:

"I thank you, sir, for your proffered kindness. I am in such a strait that I must, to a certain extent, avail myself of it. My name is Landry—Armand Landry from Louisiana—and I have a—a connection living not very far from this place, to whom I wish to have conveyed the news of the accident that has happened to me, and the hopeless condition in which I am lying. She was expecting me to visit her a few days later, but a fatal chance compelled me to come on earlier than I intended, and this is the result. Ah, God! to die thus and leave unfinished all that I had to do! It is hard—hard—"

"Yes; it is a sad fate," said Macon, in the most sympathetic tone he could command, and he really did pity the unfortunate man very deeply. "If you will confide to me the name of your friends, Mr. Landry, I will find them, and convey any message you may wish sent to them."

"Thank you. There is a lady—"

He paused, and seemed deliberating with himself how he should express what he wished to say; but presently, with a weary sigh, he went on:

"I have a young relative living in or near Blanton, that I am anxious to see before the end comes. She has some claims on me which should have been definitely settled before this time. I brought with me papers that were important to her, but they have doubtless been lost, for the baggage car took fire. If my daughter was in a condition to understand my wishes with respect to this young girl, they would be carefully carried into effect; but she is delirious, and Miss Blake herself must be told of the provision I mean to make for her. Do you know such a person?—but of course you do. In so small a place as Blanton everybody is known."

"You are quite right, sir; Mrs. Blake and her daughter, Hester, are well known to me—in fact, they are ladies in whom I take a very warm interest. I will see them to-night, and inform them of your condition. Of course they will come to you at once, and assist in nursing yourself and your daughter."

The dilating eyes of Landry were fixed immovably upon the speaker, and with sudden energy he said:

"No, no—not that: I do not wish either of them to be near me longer than is absolutely necessary, and the elder lady not at all. I will not see Mrs. Blake: there are reasons which would render an interview between us extremely painful to both parties. The excitement of a meeting with her daughter is all that I can bear in my present condition. Bring Hester hither, that I may explain to her what I intended to do for her. When my wishes are made known to my daughter Estelle, she will feel it to be a sacred duty to carry them into effect."

"I will bring Miss Blake hither as soon as possible; but will it not be better to employ a lawyer to draw up other writings, if those you refer to are lost?"

Landry glanced significantly at his crushed arm and hand, and said:

"I could not sign any document so as to render it legally valuable. When Miss Blake comes I will get her to write a few lines I shall dictate, expressing my wishes with reference to herself, and they will be religiously attended to; I am sure of that."

"Perhaps the papers you spoke of may be recovered. I will see if any of the baggage was saved, and I hope we may find what is so important to your young relative. Excuse me—but of course there must be some tie of blood between you, or you would not be so anxious on Miss Blake's account. Besides, she is the living image of your daughter, and both are strikingly like yourself."

A faint flush came into the face of Landry, and with some emotion that seemed to shake his whole being, he said:

"I regret that fact; I would not have them look alike if it could be helped; but it cannot, and—and something may grow out of that which—"

He paused abruptly, and after making an effort to control his agitation, more calmly said:

"I am afraid that my brain is becoming unsettled, for I find myself babbling strangely. You are right in your conjectures—Hester Blake is related to me, and I am bound to provide handsomely for her. Her mother and myself are not on friendly terms—have not been for many years; therefore I decline a meeting with her; but it is my most earnest desire to see and speak with the young lady before I die. Bring her hither, if she will consent to come."

"There is no doubt as to the last I am sure, Mr. Landry. I was to have spent this evening at Mrs. Blake's cottage, and I shall go thither as soon as possible after I return to the village. When Hester hears of your wish to see her, she will not hesitate to come to you."

"She should not, for all her worldly interests are at stake. She must come to me, if she wishes to understand her future position. It is my wish to be just to her, but to herself alone will I make clear my intentions. Should you find that my trunks are safe, say nothing to her about the papers in one of them. If she knew that her interests were safe, her mother might interfere to prevent Hester from coming to me, and I—I wish to see once more the child I once loved very dearly."

The last words were so faintly uttered as to be almost inaudible, and Macon thought:

"I have the clue I have so long sought, and I will use it for my own benefit. Who would have supposed that fair-spoken woman capable of the turpitude she unvailed to her own daughter this afternoon? Most men would be afraid to marry the girl who listened to that revelation as Hester did. But I am not; there is something fascinating to me in the spice of diablerie in that girl, and in me she will find a congenial spirit. I love her too well to throw the first stone at her mother. I don't know how it may be though, if Hester throws me over at last. She will hardly dare to do that, though, when she knows that both she and her mother are in my power. It will hardly be generous to make them feel this, but I cannot afford to be generous where that siren is concerned. She has bewitched me. What care I for this blot on her 'scutcheon, if she will only return my passion, and give me her own dainty, darling self? This man is rich too, and he means to give her a suitable dower: twenty, or perhaps fifty thousand dollars; and with that to start on, I could go to a city and in a few years become distinguished in my profession. 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.'"

As Macon mentally quoted this proverb, he glanced at the maimed form upon the bed, and hard as he was by nature, his conscience smote him for thinking of himself or his interests in the presence of such suffering. All that was possible he had already done for the patient, and with the new train of thought in his mind, he watched impatiently for the arrival of the young student he had requested to join him at the farm-house as soon as it was possible for him to do so.

Mr. Landry closed his eyes, and seemed to be absorbed in painful thought. The physician went into the adjoining room for a few moments to ascertain how the young girl was getting on, and found her sleeping fitfully, with Mrs. Brown beside her. After giving some whispered directions to her, he stepped lightly back to find that young Simcox had arrived, and taken his place as watcher beside Mr. Landry's bed.

The youth said, in a low voice:

"I could not get back sooner, there was so much to be done for the others; but none of them were so badly hurt as this gentleman. I am to stay with him, I suppose, until you return."

"Yes; and keep a careful watch over him. Here are stimulating drops, and if he seems to be sinking, you must give them to him yourself. It is important that he shall live till he has seen some friends of his who reside near here. You need not look in on the young lady. Mrs. Brown knows what to do for her, and she can be trusted."

Simcox nodded, and took his place beside the bed. Landry's eyes unclosed, and he dreamily regarded them; but suddenly arousing himself, he made a motion with his left hand for Macon to approach him, and whispered:

"You will bring her to-morrow—that will be time enough. I feel better, and I shall live to tell her all that I wish her to know."

"I will certainly bring her, sir. This young man will watch beside you to-night; he has some knowledge of medicine, and he is fully competent to judge of what is best to be done for you. I will be with you at as early an hour as possible in the morning. Good-night."

"Good-night; and God bless you, Dr. Macon, for you have lifted a heavy weight from my mind. Keep life in me till I have seen and talked with this young girl; if you do not, it will be bad for her unless my trunk was saved. Inquire for a black leather trunk with the name of Armand Landry on the end."

"I will do all that is possible to recover it," was the reply, and the speaker left the room.

He walked rapidly in the direction of the spot on which the disaster had occurred. Men with lanterns were in the dry bed of the creek over which the ruined bridge had been thrown, groping among the *débris*, to recover such property as was found worthy of preservation.

The baggage car with its contents had been only partially consumed, and many trunks were piled up on one side, out of the reach of the still smouldering fire. These Macon carefully examined, with the assistance of one of the men who was known to him, but among them was not the one Landry had described. One was found with the name of his daughter upon it, but his own had evidently been destroyed.

When convinced that further search was useless, Macon gave directions for having Miss Landry's trunk taken to the Brown farm; and mounting his horse, he rode rapidly toward Blanton, his mind revolving all he had lately heard, and drawing his own conclusions therefrom. His resolution was immutably fixed; he would offer Hester Blake no alternative. As his wife he would guard her mother's secret from the knowledge of others; but if she refused him, he would make known all that he had learned. Mrs. Blake would be driven from the place in which she had so long dwelt, respected by all who knew her, and the story would be sure to follow her.

Macon thought with complacency of the fortune Hester was likely to be endowed with; but to do him justice, that was of small importance in comparison with the girl herself. He had spoken truly when he said she had bewitched him. He loved her with the solitary passion of his life. Cold and impassive to all others, to her he was as wax to be moulded to her will, so long as he believed there was a possibility of winning her.

He went to his boarding-house, snatched a few morsels of supper, and after a hasty toilet, set out to make his long-deferred call. Late as it was, he knew that Mrs. Blake and her daughter would be expecting him; and he went on his way arranging in his mind what he would say, and how he would make them comprehend how completely at his mercy they both were.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Those orators who give us much noise and many words, but little argument and less wit, and who are the loudest when least lucid, should take a lesson from the great volume of nature; she often gives us the lightning without the thunder, but never the thunder without the lightning.

—Every heavy burden of sorrow seems like a stone hung round our neck, yet are they often only like the stones used by pearl divers, which enable them to reach their prize and to rise enriched.

THE BORROWED DIAMONDS.

BY AN OLD CONTRIBUTOR.

Kate Wyman liked to have Lydia Ainsworth brush her hair; there was a sort of magnetic softness in the girl's touch, that every *femme de chambre* did not possess.

As the maid was brushing the sunshiny tresses of the heiress, there was a tap at the door—Scipio, the black waiter, showing all his white teeth on the grin.

"Young man down stairs to see Miss Lyddie! Sellin' vegetables off a wagin."

Lydia's cheek grew scarlet.

"Dear me, child!" said Kate, "you needn't twitch that hair-pin out of my frizzes. Go down for a minute, if you like. I dare say he is your sweetheart."

"No, indeed, Miss Kate!" flashed out Lydia. "Nothing of the sort. I'd no one but Jonathan Sturgis, who lives on the farm next to my father's, and— But if you will excuse me just for five minutes, Miss Kate—"

And away flew Lydia, scarlet, and feather-footed.

All beaming and radiant, honest Jonathan Sturgis stood there, awkwardly twisting his cap round and round in one hand, while with the other he held a little covered basket of red winter apples.

"I thought, Lyddie," he began, forcing out the words, as with some strong inward effort, "I just thought, bein' as I was comin' up with a load o' garden sass, I'd drop in to see you, and bring you some o' them red Baldwins you always used to like so well."

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Lydia demurely.

"You haven't no idea o' coming home again?" he hazarded, still twisting the brim of the cap round and round.

"No."

"Because—well, I might as well say it at once—Aunt Thyrza's dead, and there's no one to keep house for me; and, Lyddie—"

"Don't be a goose, Jonathan," said the girl, laughing, and yet vexed. "What would you say now, if I were to tell you that I was going to a party to-night with a real gentleman?"

"I should be very sorry to believe it, Lyddie."

"Yes, I dare say; it's like your envious nature; but it's true all the same. And so I wish you a very good-morning."

"There's no harm in my wearing Miss Kate's pink silk," Lydia said to herself, as she was dressing for the ball, after Miss Wyman had gone to *her* party. "She never will know it, and it's so much more becoming than that horrid old green poplin of my own. And the black lace shawl, draped like an overskirt. Narcisse Fontaine shall not be ashamed of his partner."

But the deep color stole into her cheek, and she cast a guilty, furtive look over her shoulder at the door, when, the rest of her toilet all completed, she took a little key from under her young lady's lace-frilled bureau cover, and unlocked an inlaid jewel case.

"Narcisse wants to see how I would look in *real* diamonds," she murmured to herself, "and he shall be gratified—just this once! There can be no possible harm in wearing them one evening—as well that, as to have them lying in their case."

None of the other servants saw her dress—it was all shrouded in the grave folds of a long aqua-scutum cloak—as she hurried down to the carriage which Mr. Fontaine's gallantry had provided, and a thrill of delight passed through her heart, as she felt how entirely she should do credit to that gentleman's taste and fancy.

It was a brilliant ball enough, *for* a public ball, and Lydia, resplendent in her silks, lace and diamonds, danced until her little feet were weary. It was past midnight, when at last she remembered that, like Cinderella at the Prince's ball, she must be home betimes.

"Mr. Narcisse!" she whispered to her partner, who was rather flushed with the wine he had abundantly been partaking of, as he tripped to her side, after a whirling gallop with some other young lady, and petitioned, in a florid French way, for "just one more dance," "it is past twelve. I must be home before Miss Kate returns."

Narcisse bowed low. "Miss Ainsworth's will was his law," he protested, "and the carriage should at once wait her pleasure."

Five minutes afterward, Lydia was leaning back in the carriage, with Mr. Fontaine at her side, and the weary, dissatisfied feeling which is the sequel of most dissipation stealing over her heart.

Miss Kate's pink silk and diamonds had been very delightful for the time being; but Lydia felt sad and guilty now. She almost wished that she had not gone. How she had pitied Jonathan a little while ago—poor Jonathan, who never had been to a ball in his life! Now, she was not so very certain that he had missed such a great deal.

Suddenly she sat up and looked eagerly around her. These vacant lots and wide stretches of dark street seemed so unlike what she had fancied ought to line their route.

"Are we almost there?" she asked. "Surely the man must have lost his way! And how slowly the carriage creeps along!"

As she spoke, Mr. Fontaine uttered a low whistle, and the carriage swept up to the curb and stopped.

"Very sorry to inconvenience a lady," said Mr. Narcisse, chuckling; "but I must trouble you for those diamonds. Better not make any noise about it," he added, his voice turning to a low fierce growl, like that of a wild animal. "You are alone and helpless. All that will happen to you, if you are quiet and reasonable, will be the being left alone here, to find your way back as best you may; if not—"

"I will never give them up!" gasped poor Lydia, beginning to comprehend all the horrors of her situation. "You may kill me first, but you shall not take them from me."

And in her extremity she uttered a wild, piercing scream, which seemed to cleave the darkness like a knife.

"I'll make you pay for this, young woman,' ejaculated the infuriated Frenchman. "I'll—"

"You'll just stand aside—that's what you'll do, Squire!" roared out a voice which was like the rush of March winds through a pine forest. "Or p'r'aps you'd prefer the flat o' your back, in a good, comfortable gutter. There—you needn't holler arter your coachy; he's gone to tell 'em you're a comin'. Now, Lyddie, don't you be afeard; you're all safe now. *I'm* goin' to drive you home."

And before the astonished Lydia could open her lips to express her surprise and delight, Jonathan Sturgis had sprung on the box, and seizing the reins, turned the horses' heads homeward, entirely regardless of the shouts of the two disabled ruffians whom every step left further behind them.

"Jonathan—*dear* Jonathan, how—when—" she began eagerly, as he opened the door for her to alight, at her own home.

"Well, I kind o' wanted to get a look at that fellow you spoke of, Lyddie," he answered, with a sheepish laugh; "so, arter I'd sold my things, I sort o' hung round and watched you drive off, and followed the coach. I wanted to see you come out ag'in, and as I waited, I heard the Frenchy say somethin' I didn't exactly like the sound of, so I made up my mind you shouldn't be left without one friend in case of emergency. I an't a bad walker, you know, Lyddie, so I just kept you in sight till—you know what."

"Oh Jonathan!" sobbed the poor girl. "How can I ever pay you?"

"I won't ask for no pay just yet, Lyddie," answered the honest fellow; "but if you ever want another situation, there's the Mill Brook Farm ready and waitin' for a mistress."

"Jonathan—"

"Well?"

Lydia began to cry softly. "I'll come when you like, Jonathan. I'm sick of this great wicked, cruel city."

She "gave warning" the next morning. And Miss Wyman never knew how near she had been to losing her *parure* of diamonds that bleak March night. While the little mistress of the Mill Brook Farm has forgotten all Lydia Ainsworth's city airs and graces, and is "the happiest wife in all the world."

WIT AND HUMOR.

A CORPULENT old lady asked for a ticket at the window of one of the Harlem Railroad depots the other day, when the clerk thought he would perpetrate a joke, and said, "Yes'm; will you go in the cattle train or the passenger train?" The old lady looked at him a moment, and then said, "If *you* are a specimen of what I shall find in the passenger train, give me a ticket for the cattle train, by all means."

AFTER a North Carolina jury had been "charged" in the usual way by the judge, a white juror ventured to ask a colored associate if he "understood the charge of his Honor." "Lor' a massy!" exclaimed the astonished African, "you don't mean to say dat he *charges* us anyt'ing for dat, does ye? Why, I t'ought as how we was a gwine to get pay!"

A BANGOR, Me., prohibitionist was recently discussing the liquor law, and strongly urged its strict enforcement. To emphasize his remarks, he gesticulated with his umbrella, whereupon a black bottle fell to the pavement with a crash, and the odor of "Old Bourbon" was diffused around. That closed the argument.

A YOUNG lady who was looking at a picture representing a pair of lovers standing on a door-step gazing at a moonlit landscape, with the arm of the lover gently enfolding the waist of his sweetheart, appreciatively exclaimed, "What a lovely picture! How *natural* everything is!"

A MAN named Hog who had been found guilty of murder, laid claim to some relationship with the judge about to sentence him, whose name was Bacon. "I think you are mistaken," blandly responded the judge. "Hog must be hung before it can be good Bacon."

A TEXAS JOKE.—A man named Wells having stepped upon a quicksand in the river near Brownsville, he instantly sank out of sight, whereupon one of his companions remarked, "That's a new way of sinking wells."

A CANDIDATE for a situation as school-teacher in Florida, being asked the shape of the earth, replied, "Well, some folks likes it round and some likes it flat, and I've jinnerly teached it both ways."

A WESTERN traveller writes, "In passing through the burnt district in Wisconsin, I saw no shrubs or briers anywhere, a thing I never saw before, and would not have believed it had I not seen it."

"FIRST class in geography take your places. Now then, why is the Connecticut river so called?" "'Cause, mem, it *connects* Vermont and Connecticut and *cuts* through Massachusetts."

A SHOEMAKER in a Vermont village having put a placard over his door, "I Will Not Trust No More," his rival across the street painted over his shop door, "Trust Here Forever."

"IN the absence of globes, how do you illustrate the shape of the earth to your scholars?" asked a committee of a school-teacher. "I shows 'em my head," was the reply.

THE Detroit *Free Press* says an old man of that city has played ninety thousand games of checkers. What a checkered career that old man must have had.

"EF de white folks be so dark as dat out dar," said a negro who was gazing at some Japanese, "I wonder what is de color ob de black folks?"

ORNITHOLOGISTS have often wondered that birds are not melancholy in the morning, as their little bills are then all over dew.

THE California Legislature has passed a bill that "religion shall neither be taught nor *practiced* in the public schools."

A WEATHER prophet predicts "a hot summer, because the bark on the north side of dogs is much thinner than usual."

THE cat with nine lives always falls on its own feet; but the cat with nine tails always falls on somebody else's back.

PROFESSORS of geology are now debating the following question: "Were there bugs in the carboniferous beds?"

IT is said of a certain United States Senator that he has a seat which will never fail him. It is self-conceit.

NEWSPAPERS should send only such reporters to cattle shows as are accustomed to pens.

THE seamstress' motto—As you sew, so shall you rip, especially if you can sew only so-so.

ABOUT the best schism that a man can be guilty of is witticism.

CURRENT ITEMS.

As a desperado named Proctor, who has committed eighteen murders, was on trial for the murder of his wife, at the Talaquah Court House, in Snake district, Indian Territory, a fight occurred between his friends and the authorities, in which the United States Judge received three buckshot in his knee, and seven United States Deputy Marshals and the Sheriff were killed. Three of the desperadoes were also killed and fourteen wounded, and a force was immediately organized to hunt down and exterminate the entire gang.

A PRISONER in the Indiana Penitentiary sought to escape by getting himself nailed up, by a companion, in a box labelled "wagon spokes," which was so arranged that he could open one end of it by pulling a string; but when the box was carried out, it was stood up on the wrong end for the prisoner, leaving him standing on his head. He stood it for about twenty minutes, and then yelled, "Turn this box up the other way." He was soon taken back to his old quarters.

LADY CHARLES KERR, daughter of the Duchess of Roxburghe, while recently following the hounds near Dangley Marsh, met with an accident which may have since proved fatal. Her horse stumbled at the first fence, which gave way under him, and she lost her seat. As she lay on the ground, the animal, recovering, struck her on the side of the head with his fore-foot, completely severing the ear and causing a fearful concussion of the brain.

A PHILADELPHIA thief who was carried to a photograph gallery to have his likeness taken, a few days ago, was so much averse to the operation, that when the first landing was reached, he burst through the glass door, falling upon a roof, and then jumped to the ground, a distance of twenty feet. To his surprise, the intrepid officer in charge followed by the same perilous route, and after a brief chase recaptured him.

THE police of Japan are said to be the most vigilant and faithful in the world. When you have anything stolen, they hunt down the thief, and then, to show that there is no collusion with him, they bring him to your house and chop off his head on your own door-step; or, if you prefer to do so, they will let you chop off his head yourself, for a small consideration.

A BOY fifteen years old, living in Boston, was found in a dying condition by his parents, one afternoon recently, with a letter by his side, in which he stated that he had taken laudanum, as he was tired of living, believed he was insane, and wanted to go to a better world. He died within an hour after he was discovered.

THE public executioner, or headsman, of Paris, who died the other day, was so proud of his profession, that whenever he had an execution on hand, he always *rehearsed* the performance the night before, by cutting off the head of a calf, so as to see that his guillotine and his nerves were in order.

A BOY twelve years old, of Montgomery county, Ky., whose father is serving a term in the Missouri Penitentiary, having insultingly disobeyed his mother, she attempted to punish him, when the little savage drew a knife and plunging it into her bosom inflicted a mortal wound.

CAPTAIN STRONG of Kalamazoo, Mich., whose wife came to her death about two weeks ago, from the effects of the explosion of a kerosene lamp, has since also died from the burning which he received in trying to save his wife. The captain was eighty-eight years old.

ACCORDING to the record there has been a steady increase in earthquakes since the first mention was made of them; they having risen from twenty-one in the fourth century to nine hundred and twenty-five in the nineteenth.

A MAN who wouldn't believe that a buzz saw, in a factory in Norwich, was in motion, put a couple of fingers on it to settle the matter, and their immediate loss satisfied him that he had been in error.

A PARIS shopkeeper lately put a notice over his door, that as his daughter had just made a splendid match, he would sell goods at a reduction of twenty-five per cent. for a week.

THOMAS CAIN of Winona was deprived of both legs by a railroad accident at La Salle, and the sight of his sad condition caused his aged mother to fall dead in his presence.

THERE is said to be a female preacher in New Hampshire who delivers one of Henry Ward Beecher's sermons to her congregation every Sunday.

REACH THE VAN!

BY CALEB DUNN.

Reach the van! let not the rear
Ever be your marching place;
Foster courage, banish fear,
Wear a brave, determined face
Reach the van!

Only they, the brave and true—
Nature's noblemen—can hope
By the glorious work they do
To reach fulfillment's widest scope—
Reach the van!

Laggards, drones, and slaves of ease,
Sluggards long beyond the dawn,
Ne'er the golden moment seize
Which to grand success leads on—
Reach the van!

Man was made to show his might,
Not to grovel in the dust;
Man was made to work for Right,
Not in sin and sloth to rust—
Reach the van!

Ill may come, but ne'er so dark
Was a cloud that did not hold
'Neath its gloom hope's cheering spark,
Soon to glow like beaming gold—
Reach the van!

Do your best then, use your power,
Be content not in the rear;
Full improve each golden hour—
Be the first in all your sphere—
Reach the van!

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

By MRS. SOUTHWORTH,
AUTHOR OF "THE HIDDEN HAND," "SELF-MADE," "THE BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER CIX.

GREAT PROSPERITY.

> Fortune is merry,
> And in this mood will give us anything.
> SHAKESPEARE.

Alden Lytton prospered wonderfully.

Not once in a thousand instances can a young professional man get on as fast as he did.

Usually the young lawyer or doctor has to wait long before work comes to him, and then to work long before money comes.

It was not so with Alden Lytton.

As soon as he opened his office, business came in at the door.

His first brief was a success.

His second, and more difficult one, was a still greater victory.

His third, and most important, was the greatest triumph of the three.

And from this time the high road to fame and fortune was open to him.

The astonishing rapidity of his rise was explained in various ways by different persons.

Emma Cavendish, who loved and esteemed him, ascribed his great prosperity to his own splendid talents alone.

Alden Lytton himself, full of filial respect, attributed it to the prestige of his late father's distinguished name.

And the briefless young lawyers, his unsuccessful rivals at the bar, credited it all to the "loud" advertisement afforded by his handsome office, and the general appearance of wealth and prosperity that surrounded him.

No doubt they were all right, and—all wrong.

Not one of these circumstances taken alone could have secured the young barrister's success. Neither his own talents, nor his father's name, nor the costly appointments of his office, could have done it; yet each contributed something, and all together they combined to insure his rapid advancement in his profession.

While Alden Lytton was thus gaining fame and fortune, Mary Grey was engaged in mystifying the minds, and winning the sympathy and compassion of all her acquaintances.

From the time of her return from Philadelphia she had exhibited a deep and incurable melancholy.

Everybody pitied her deeply, and wondered what could be the secret sorrow under which she was suffering.

But when any friend more curious than the rest ventured to question her, she answered:

"I have borne and am still bearing the deepest wrong that any woman can suffer and survive. But I must not speak of it now. My hands are bound, and my tongue is tied. But the time *may* come when a higher duty than that which restrains me now may force me to speak. Until then I must be mute."

This was extremely tantalizing to all her friends; but it was all that could be got from her.

Meanwhile her face faded into a deadlier pallor, and her form wasted to a ghastlier thinness. And this was real, for she was demon-haunted!—a victim of remorse, not a subject of repentance.

The spectre that she had feared to look upon on the fatal night of her crime—the pale, dripping form of her betrayed and murdered lover—was ever before her mind's eye.

If she entered a solitary or a half-darkened room, the phantom lurked in the shadowy corners or met her face to face!

It came to her bedside in the dead of night and laid its clammy wet hand upon her sleeping brow. And when she woke in wild affright, it met her transfixed and horrified gaze.

Her only relief was in opium. She would stupefy herself every night with opium, and wake late every morning, pale, haggard, dull and heavy.

She must have sunk under her mental suffering and material mal-practices, but for the one purpose that had once carried her into crime, and now kept her alive through the terror and remorse that were the natural consequences of that crime. She lived only for revenge—

> "Like lightning fire,
> To speed one bolt of ruin and expire!"

"I will live and keep sane until I degrade and destroy both Alden Lytton and Emma Cavendish, and then—I must die or go mad!" she said to herself.

Such was her inner life.

Her outer life was very different from this. She was still to all appearance a zealous church woman, never missing a service either on Sundays or on week-days, never neglecting the sewing circles, the missionary meetings, the Sunday-schools, or any other of the parish works or charities, and always contributing liberally to every benevolent enterprise from the munificent income paid her quarterly by Miss Cavendish.

Since her return from Philadelphia she had not resumed her acquaintance with Alden Lytton.

They did not attend the same church, and were not in the same circle. It was a very reserved "circle" in which Mary Grey "circulated;" while Alden Lytton sought the company of professional and scholarly men.

Thus for months after their return to Richmond they did not meet.

Alden Lytton in the mean while supposed her to be still in Philadelphia, filling a position as drawing-mistress in the Ladies' College.

It was early in the winter when they accidentally encountered each other on Main street.

On seeing her form approach, Alden Lytton stepped quickly to meet her, with an extended hand and a bright smile; but the next instant he started with sorrowful surprise, as his eyes fell upon her pallid emaciated face, so changed since he had seen it last.

"My dear Mrs. Grey, I am so glad to see you! I hope I see you well," he added, as he took her hand, but his looks belied his "hope."

"I am not well, thank you," she answered plaintively, and *her* looks did *not* belie her words.

"I am very sorry to hear it. How long have you been in the city?" he next inquired, holding her hand and looking at her with eyes full of pity.

"I have been back some time," she answered vaguely. "I was forced to leave my situation from failing health."

"I did not know that you had returned, or I should have called on you before this. But," he added, perceiving her physical weakness, "I am wrong to keep you standing here. I will turn about and walk with you while we talk. Which way are you going? Will you take my arm?"

"Thanks, no, Mr. Lytton. I cannot take your arm; and neither, if you will forgive me for saying it, can I receive a visit from you. The world is censorious, Alden Lytton! And in my lonely and unprotected position I dare not receive the visits of gentlemen," she answered pensively.

"That seems hard, but doubtless it is discreet. However, that will all be changed, I hope, in a little while. In a very few months, I trust, your home will be with my beloved wife and myself. I know it is Emma's desire that you should live with us," he said, still kindly holding her thin hand.

"Is your wedding to come off so soon?" she inquired.

"Yes, in a few weeks, and then we are to go to Europe for a short holiday, and afterward take a house in the city here," said Alden, smiling.

"I wish you every joy in your wedded life. And now, Mr. Lytton, you must let me go," she said wearily.

"One moment. You do not write to Emma often, do you? I ask, because only a week ago, in one of her letters to me, Miss Cavendish wrote that she had not heard from you for nearly three months, and requested me to find out your address, if possible. I wrote back in reply that I believed you to be at the Ladies' College, in Philadelphia," he said, still detaining her hand.

"I am a bad correspondent. My hand is still lame. Just before I left here for Philadelphia, I sent Miss Cavendish an acknowledgment of the last quarterly sum she sent me. I told her then that I was about to go to Philadelphia on particular business. I have not written to her since."

"And that was nearly three months ago. That is just what is the matter. She wishes to find out your address, so as to know where to send the next quarterly installment of your income, which will soon be due."

"Tell her that I have returned to this city. And that my address is the same as that to which she last wrote."

"I will; but do *you* write to her also. I *know* she is anxious to hear directly from you."

"I will do so," she replied; "though I am the worst possible correspondent. Now, good-day, Mr. Lytton."

"If I may not call to see you, at least I hope that you will let me know if ever I can serve you in any manner," he said gently, as he pressed the pale hand he had held so long, and relinquished it.

They parted then, and saw no more of each other for some days.

Alden went on to his office full of pity for the failing woman, who, he said to himself, could not possibly have many months to live.

But his feelings of painful compassion were soon forgotten in his happiness in finding a letter from Emma Cavendish lying with his business correspondence on his desk.

There was really nothing more in it than appeared in just such letters that he received two or three times a week, only she told him that she had written to Mrs. Grey at the Ladies' College, Philadelphia, and had not received any answer to her letter.

Before doing any other business, Alden Lytton took a half-quire of note paper and dashed off an exuberant letter to his lady-love, in which, after repeating the oft-told story of *her* peerless loveliness and *his* deathless devotion, he came down to practical matters, and spoke of their mutual friend Mary Grey. He told Emma that Mrs. Grey was in the city again, where she had been for some weeks, although he had not been aware of the fact until he had met her that morning on Main street, while on the way to his office.

He told her of "poor Mary Grey's" failing health and spirits, and ghastly appearance, and suggested those circumstances as probable reasons why she had not written to her friends during the last three months.

Then he went back to the old everlasting theme of his infinite, eternal love, etc., etc., etc., and closed with fervent prayers and blessings and joyful anticipations.

CHAPTER CX.

THE MASK THROWN OFF.

As a consequence of this, two days afterward Mary Grey received a tender, affectionate, sympathetic letter from Emma Cavendish, pressing her to come down to Blue Cliffs at once, and let them love her and nurse her back to health and happiness. And this letter inclosed a check for double the amount of the usual quarterly stipend.

Miss Cavendish, for some coy reason or other, did not allude to her approaching marriage. Perhaps she deferred the communication purposely, with the friendly hope that Mary Grey would visit her at Blue Cliffs, where she could make it to her in person.

Mrs. Grey, who did not dare to let her true handwriting go to Blue Cliffs, lest it should be seen and recognized by Mrs. Fanning, and who could not disguise it safely either, without some fair excuse to Emma Cavendish for doing so, put on a tight glove, and took a hard stiff pen and wrote a short note, full of gratitude and affection for Emma and all the family, and of complaints about her wretched crippled finger, that made it so painful for her to write, and prevented her from doing so as often as she wished, and of her still more wretched health, that hindered her from accepting her dear friend's kind invitation.

In reply to this letter, she got another, and a still kinder one, in which Miss Cavendish spoke of her own speedily approaching marriage, and pressed Mrs. Grey to come and be present on the occasion, adding:

"My dearest, you *must* make an effort and come. Alden himself will escort you on the journey, and take such good care of you, that you shall suffer no inconvenience from the journey. You must come, for my happiness will not be complete without the presence of my dear father's dearest friend—of her who was to have been his bride."

This loving and confiding letter was never answered or even acknowledged by Mrs. Grey. It was entirely ignored, its contents were never mentioned to any one, and itself was torn to fragments and burned to ashes.

Two more letters of precisely the same character were written to her by Miss Cavendish; but they suffered the same fate at the hands of Mrs. Grey.

She had a deep motive in ignoring and destroying those letters. She did not wish the world ever by any accident to find out that she had been informed of the approaching marriage of Alden Lytton and Emma Cavendish before it had taken place, or in time to prevent it.

Two weeks passed, and then she received a visit from Mr. Alden Lytton.

She received him alone in the front drawing-room.

He apologized for calling on her after she had forbidden him to do so, but said that he came on the part of Miss Cavendish to ask if she had received certain letters from Blue Cliff Hall, and to renew in Emma's name her pressing invitation to Mrs. Grey to come and be present at the approaching wedding.

"Emma wishes me to take charge of you on the journey. And I assure you, if you will intrust yourself to me, I will take such tender care of you, that you shall know neither fatigue nor inconvenience of any sort," he added earnestly.

"I cannot go," she answered coldly.

"Ah, *do*, for your friend's sake, change your mind," pleaded Alden.

"I cannot," she answered.

"But Emma will be so disappointed."

"I cannot help it, if she should be. I cannot be present at the wedding," she repeated faintly.

"But why not? Why can you not go?" persisted Alden.

"Man! man!" she burst forth suddenly, as her whole face changed fearfully, "how can you ask me such a question? Do you forget that *we* were to have been married once? that *we* loved each other once? But you threw me over. Now you invite me to your wedding with my rival! And you ask me why I cannot go! Do you take me for a woman of wood, or stone, or iron? You will find me a woman of fire! I told you not to come here—to keep away from me! If you had had sense to perceive—if you had had even eyes in your head to see with, you would have obeyed me, and avoided me! I told you not to come here. I tell you now to go away. I will not be present at your wedding. Make what explanation or excuses to Miss Cavendish you please. Tell her, if you like, that the heart you have given her was first offered to *me!*—that the vows you have made to her were first breathed at *my* feet! Tell her," she added, with keen contempt, "that you are but a poor, *second-handed* article, after all! Now go, I say! Why do you stand gazing upon me? Go, and never come near me, if you can help it, again. For I fancy that you will not feel very glad to see me when NEXT we meet!" she hissed, with a hidden meaning, between her clenched teeth.

Alden Lytton was so unutterably amazed by this sudden outbreak, that he had no power of replying by word or gesture. Without resenting her fierce accusation, or even noticing her covert threat, he stood staring at her for a moment in speechless amazement.

"*Are* you going?" she fiercely demanded.

"I am going," he said, recovering his self-possession. "I am going. But, Mrs. Grey, I am more surprised and grieved than I have words to express. I shall never, willingly, voluntarily approach you again. If, however, you should ever need a friend, do not hesitate to call on me as freely as you would upon a brother, and I shall serve you in any way in my power as willingly as if you were my own sister."

"*Ur-ur-ur-r-r!*" she broke forth, in an inarticulate growl of disgust and abhorrence.

"Good-bye!" he said very gently, as he bowed and left the room.

Nothing but sympathy and compassion for this "poor woman," as he called her, filled his heart.

Her outbreak of hysterical passion had been a revelation to him; but it had shown him only *half* the truth. In its light he saw that she loved him still, but he did not see that she hated her rival. He saw that she was jealous, but did not see that she was revengeful.

He reproached himself bitterly, bitterly, for ever having fallen under her spell, for ever having loved her, or sought to win her love, and for thus being the remote cause of her present sorrows.

He had never confided to Emma Cavendish the story of his first foolish, boyish love, and sufferings, and cure. For Mary Grey's sake he had kept that secret from his betrothed, from whom he had no other secret in the world.

But now he felt that he must tell Emma the truth gently and lovingly, lest Mary Grey should do it rudely and angrily.

For Mary Grey's sake, he had hitherto been silent. For his own and Emma Cavendish's sake, he must now speak.

He went straight to the telegraph office and dispatched a message to Miss Cavendish, saying that he should be down to Wendover by the next train, to pay her a flying visit.

Then he hurried to his office, put his papers in order, left some directions with his clerk, and hastened off to the railway station, where he caught the train just as it started, and jumped aboard the cars while they were in motion.

CHAPTER CXI.

A SUDDEN WEDDING.

It was midnight when the Richmond train reached Wendover, and Alden Lytton went to the "Reindeer" for the night.

Early in the morning he arose and breakfasted, and ordered a horse to take him to Blue Cliff Hall.

Just as he was getting into the saddle, Jerome, the colored footman from the Hall, rode up, holding two papers in his left hand, and staring at them with perplexity.

"Halloe, Jerome, how do you do?" called out Mr. Lytton cheerfully.

The boy looked up, and his surprise and perplexity instantly mounted to consternation and amazement.

"Well! dis yer's witchcraf', and nuffin else!" he exclaimed.

"What is witchcraft, you goose?" laughed Alden.

"Look yer, massa!" said Jerome, riding up to his side and putting the two papers in his hands. "You jes look at dem dere."

Alden took the papers and looked as required.

Both papers were telegrams. One was his own telegram to Emma Cavendish, saying:

"*I shall be down to see you by the next train.*"

The other was a telegram from Emma Cavendish to himself, saying:

"*Come down at once.*"

"Well, what of all this? Here is a message and its answer. What is there in this like witchcraft?"

"Why, massa, 'cause de answer came *afore* de message went, and you yerself come quick as enny. Dere's de witchcraf'."

"What do you mean?"

"I knowed as de telegraf was fast, and likewise de steam cars, but I didn't know as dey was bof so fast as to answer a message afore it was axed, and fetch a gemman afore he was sent for. But here's de answer, and here's you."

"This is all Hebrew to me."

"Which it is likewise a conundrum to me," retorted Jerome.

"Tell me what you have been doing, and perhaps I shall understand you," laughed Alden Lytton.

"Well, massa, this mornin' by daybreak Miss Emmer sent for me, and give me *this*," he said, pointing to the young lady's telegram. "And says she:

"'Jerome, saddle the fastest horse in de stable, and ride as fast as you can to Wendover, and send this message off to Mr. Lytton. Lose no time, for we want him to come down here as soon as possible.'

"Well, Massa Alden, I didn't lose no time, sar, nor likewise let de grass grow unnerneaf of my feet! I reckon I was in de saddle and off in about ten minutes. But fast as I was, bress you, sar, de telegraf was faster. When I got to de office and hand de message in to de gemman dere, I says:

"'Send it off quick, 'cause Miss Emmer wants Massa Alden to come down right away.'

"'All right,' he says. 'The young gentleman will be down by the next train. And here's yer answer to yer message.'

"And sure nuff, Massa Alden, he hands me *this yer*," said Jerome, pointing to Alden's own telegram. "And here's you too! Now, what anybody think of dat if it an't witchcraf'?"

"It is a coincidence, my good fellow. I was coming down, and I telegraphed Miss Cavendish to that effect. When you brought her message to the office, you received mine, which must have been delayed. It is a coincidence."

"Well, I s'pose a coimperence is a fine book larnin' name for witchcraf'; but it's all the same fing after all," persisted Jerome.

"I hope they are all well at Blue Cliffs," said Mr. Lytton, who felt some little uneasiness connected with Emma's telegram.

"Yes, sar, dey's all purty well, 'cept tis de ole Madam. She an't been that hearty as she ought to a been."

"I hope she is not seriously ill?"

"No, sar; dough I did leave a message long o' Doctor Willet to come out dere dis morning; but you know de ole Madam do frequent send for de doctor."

"Come, Jerome, we must get on to the Hall," said Mr. Lytton, as he rode out of the inn yard and turned into the road leading to Blue Cliffs, followed by the servant.

Emma Cavendish, who was on the look-out for Jerome, was surprised and delighted to see her lover ride up first, attended by her messenger.

"It's witchcraf', Miss Emmer!" exclaimed Jerome, as he got out of his saddle to take the young gentleman's horse.

"It is a coincidence," laughed Alden, as he ran up the steps to greet his beloved.

"Well, dat's de Latin for witchcraf', Miss Emmer; but it's all de same ting in English," persisted Jerome, as he led away the horses.

"Jerome tells me that grandma is not well. I am sorry to hear it," said Alden, as he walked with Emma into the house.

"Grandma is nearly ninety years old, and she cannot ever be well in this world; but she will soon be very well indeed, for she is very near her eternal youth and health," said Emma, with tender, cheerful earnestness.

Alden bowed in silence as they entered the drawing-room together.

"Grandma told me to telegraph for you to come down at once, Alden. She thinks that she cannot be here many days, and perhaps not many hours. And she wishes to see you at once. Will you go to her now, dear, or would you rather go to your room first?"

"I will go to see Madam first. I have but ridden from the Reindeer this morning, and so I am neither fatigued nor dusted. I telegraphed you yesterday that I was coming down to see you to-day, and my telegram should have reached you yesterday, but it seems to have been delayed. I left the city by the noon train, and reached the village at midnight. So I happened to meet Jerome just after he had taken my delayed telegram from the agent, which he supposed to be a magical answer to your message."

"The whole arrangements of telegraph wires, steam engines, gas-lights and lucifer matches are magical to him," said Emma, smiling. "And now stay here a moment, dear, and wait until I go and let grandma know that you have come," she added, as she went out of the room.

Emma Cavendish found the old lady sitting up in her easy-chair by the sunny window, looking very white and fragile and serene.

"Alden has come, grandma, dear. When Jerome went to send the telegram off for him, he found Mr. Lytton in Wendover. Mr. Lytton had just arrived from Richmond, and was about to start for Blue Cliffs. It was a coincidence," said Emma, sitting down by the old lady.

"It was a providence, my dear child—a providence which has saved two days in time that is very short. And so he is here?" said the old lady, caressing the golden hair of the girl.

"Yes, dear grandma, he is here and waiting to come to you the moment you are ready to receive him."

"Tell him to come now. And do you come with him."

Emma left the room, and soon returned with Alden Lytton.

"Welcome, my son. Come here and embrace me," said the old lady, holding out her arms.

Alden went and folded the faded form to his bosom, and pressed a kiss upon the venerable brow, as the tears sprang to his eyes; for he saw that she was dying.

"Alden, I am going home. I must go. I want to go. I have been here so long. I am very tired. I have had enough of this. I want to go home to my Father. I want to see my Saviour face to face. I want to meet my husband and my children, who have been waiting for me so long on the other side.—What are you crying for, Emma?"

"Because I cannot help it, grandma. I know I ought not to cry, when you will soon be so happy," sobbed the poor child.

"And when I am going to make you and your worthy young lover so happy, my love. Come, wipe your eyes and smile! I shall soon be very happy, and I want to make you and Alden as happy as I can before I go. Now sit down both of you, and listen to me."

Alden and Emma sat down, one on each side of her.

She was a little tired with the words she had already spoken, and she put a small vial of ammonia to her nose and smelled it before she went on.

"Now," she said, as she put aside the vial, and gave a hand to each of the young people, "I want you to attend to me, and do exactly as I bid you."

"We will, indeed," answered Alden and Emma, in a breath.

"I wish you to be married here in my presence to-morrow morning."

Alden Lytton gave her hand a grateful squeeze.

"You should be married to-day, if there were time to make the necessary arrangements."

"Are there any really necessary arrangements that cannot be made to-day?" Alden inquired eagerly.

"Yes, my son. A messenger must take a letter to Lytton Lodge, to explain the circumstances, and to ask your sister Laura and your aunt and uncle Lytton to come immediately, to be present at your marriage with my granddaughter. If the messenger to Lytton Lodge should start at noon to-day, as he must, he will hardly reach the Lodge before night. Nor will your relatives be able to reach here before noon to-morrow. So you see the necessity of the short delay."

"Yes, certainly," answered Alden.

"Another messenger must take a similar letter to Beresford Manors, to summon my son and my youngest granddaughter, and your worthy guardian Mr. Brent, who is on a long visit there. And it will also take about twenty-four hours to bring them here."

"Yes, of course," admitted Alden.

"I say nothing of the time it will take to get a license and to fetch Mr. Lyle, who must perform the ceremony, because that can be done in a few hours."

"If it were possible, I would like to have Mary Grey summoned by telegraph to attend the wedding," said Emma.

"Ah, yes, certainly she ought to be here; but there is scarcely a chance, the time is so short," said Mrs. Cavendish, as she again resorted to the vial of ammonia.

"Mrs. Grey is in very bad health. She would not come," explained Alden.

"Go now, my dear children. I am very tired; and I must sleep a while," sighed the old lady.

And Emma and Alden kissed her, and left the room.

In the passage outside they met Mrs. Fanning, who seemed to be waiting for them.

She cordially welcomed Mr. Lytton, of whose arrival she had heard from the servants. And then she inquired of Emma how Mrs. Cavendish was getting on.

"She grows weaker in the body and stronger in the spirit with every successive hour, I think," replied Miss Cavendish.

"Well, my dear, I only wished to ask you that, and to tell you that I have had lunch laid in the little breakfast room, if Mr. Lytton would like any," said Mrs. Fanning, who now took equal share in all Emma's housekeeping cares.

But Alden, when appealed to, declined the lunch, and hinted that they had better see to sending off the messengers to Beresford Manors and Lytton Lodge immediately.

And that same noon the letters were dispatched.

Alden Lytton had come down to Blue Cliffs for the purpose of confiding to Emma Cavendish the story of his first boyish passion for Mary Grey, and of the violent manner in which it was cured for ever. But finding all the circumstances so opposite to what he expected to find them, he changed his purpose. He could not bring himself to add another item to the disturbing influences then surrounding Emma.

That afternoon also Dr. Willett came to Blue Cliffs, and Emma had to accompany him to the bedside of her grandmother, and afterward to hold quite a long conversation with him in the library.

A few minutes after the doctor left the house, Mr. Lyle, who had heard of the illness of Mrs. Cavendish, arrived to inquire after her condition.

Emma had to receive the minister and accompany him to her grandmother's chamber, and to stay there and join in the prayers that were offered for the sick woman.

Mr. Lyle remained with the family all the afternoon; and having received from Mr. Lytton a notice of the ceremony he was desired to perform the next day, he promised to be at Blue Cliff Hall again, punctually at noon, and then took leave.

Very early the next morning Alden Lytton mounted the swiftest horse in the Cavendish stables, and rode to Wendover to procure his marriage license.

He did not stay long in the village, you may be sure; but, leaving his horse to rest and drink at the "Reindeer" trough, he hurried to the town-hall and took out his license, returned to the inn, remounted his horse, and rode immediately back to Blue Cliff Hall.

As he rode up the avenue toward the front of the house, he saw that there had already been some arrival. A large lumbering old family carriage was being driven, empty, around toward the stables.

Alden quickened his horse's pace and rode up to the door, dismounted, threw his reins to Peter the young groom, who was waiting to take the horse, and then ran up the steps into the house.

He almost immediately found himself in the arms of his sister Laura, who had run out to receive him.

"Oh, Alden, my darling, I am so delighted. I wish you so much joy!" she exclaimed.

"Only the occasion that has hastened my happiness is a sad one to others, Laura, my dear," answered the young man gravely.

"I don't think so at all. I have seen Mrs. Cavendish. I never saw a happier woman. She is so happy that she wishes to make everybody else as happy as she is herself," said Laura.

As she spoke John Lytton came lumbering into the hall.

"Alden, boy! how do? I never was so astonished in my life! But under the circumstances I suppose that it is all right to hurry up things in this a-way. Your aunt Kitty couldn't come; nyther could your grandmother nor the gals. Fact is, they hadn't the gownds to appear in. But they wish you joy; and so do I. For though I do think you might a looked higher, because the Lyttonses is a much older family than the Caverndishers, and, in fact, were lords of the manor when the Caverndishers were hewers—"

"Uncle John!" broke in Alden, with a laugh. "Pray let that subject drop for the present. And follow Jerome, who is waiting to show you a room where you can brush your coat and smooth your hair, and—"

"Make myself tidy for the wedding? All right, my boy! March on, Jerome," said John Lytton good-humoredly, as he followed his guide up stairs.

As he disappeared another carriage rolled up to the front door, and Dr. Beresford Jones, Electra, and Mr. Joseph Brent—Victor Hartman—alighted from it and entered the house.

Alden and Laura Lytton stepped forward to receive them.

Electra seized and kissed Laura in a hurry, while the gentlemen were shaking hands, and then she flew to Alden and congratulated him with much effusion.

"Now, Laura, take me where I can change my dress quickly. I brought a white India muslin with me to wear, for I am to be bride's-maid of course! So are you, I suppose. But you haven't changed your dress yet. Where is Emma? What is she going to be married in?"

"Be quiet, you little Bohemian," said Laura, cutting short Electra's torrent of words. "Don't you feel that this is no ordinary wedding? The occasion, if not a sorrowful one, is at least very serious. Come, I will take you with me to my own room. We are to lodge together in the south-west room, as usual."

"But are you to be a bride's-maid?" persisted the "little Bohemian."

"Yes; and to wear my white tarletan dress and white rose wreath," answered Laura, as they went off together.

"Where's Emma, and what's she doing? as I asked you some time ago."

"She is in her chamber, dressing for the ceremony."

"She hasn't got her wedding dress made yet; that I know. What's she going to be married in?"

"She will wear her white satin trained dress, with white lace over-dress, which she had made for the last May ball, you remember."

"Oh, yes. I didn't think of that."

"And she will wear that rich, priceless cardinal point lace vail that was her mother's. And she will wear her grandmother's rare oriental pearls. There, you little gipsy! Are you answered?"

"Yes. And she will be magnificent and splendid, even if she is gotten up in a hurry," said Electra, as she followed her companion into their room.

Alden Lytton, under the unusual circumstances attending the sudden wedding, and in the surprise of his own unexpected happiness, had not once thought of the necessity of making a proper toilet for the occasion. But when he heard the girls, who never, under any circumstances, forget such a matter, talking of their dress, he glanced down at his own suit, and then hurried off as fast as he could to his room to improve his appearance.

While the younger members of the family party were at their toilets, Dr. Beresford Jones was in the "Throne Room," closeted with his mother.

Madam Cavendish, weak as she was, had insisted upon being arrayed grandly, to do honor to the wedding of the only daughter of the house.

She wore a rich crimson brocade dressing-gown, a costly camel's hair shawl, and a fine point lace cap. She now reclined very wearily in her easy-chair, and held in her hand the vial of ammonia, which she applied to her nose from time to time.

After a little while she said to her son:

"Go and inquire if they are nearly ready, Beresford. I fear, I fear my strength will scarcely hold out," she faltered faintly.

Dr. Jones opened the door to go upon this errand, and immediately perceived that it was unnecessary.

John Lytton and Mr. Lyle were coming up the stairs, and the little bridal procession was forming in the hall below.

Mr. Lyle came in and spoke to Dr. Jones.

"With Mrs. Cavendish's permission, even now at the last moment, we must make some slight change in the programme," he said.

"Well?" inquired Dr. Jones pleasantly.

"I *was* to have performed the ceremony, and you were to have given the bride away?"

"Yes."

"Well, we must change that. Mr. Lytton has but one groom's-man. I must act in that capacity also. You will please perform the ceremony, and Mr. John Lytton here will have the honor of giving the bride away."

John Lytton bowed.

"I am quite willing. I will speak to Mrs. Cavendish," said Dr. Jones, who went to his mother's chair and explained the situation to her.

"Certainly; be it as you will," she said.

Mr. Lyle then returned to the foot of the stairs, and placed himself beside Laura Lytton, who was acting as first bride's-maid.

John Lytton and Dr. Jones remained in the room.

The little bridal procession soon entered, and ranged themselves in order before the minister.

Emma, as Electra had said, looked beautiful as a woman and elegant as a bride. Her bride's-maids also were very fair to see.

The ceremony was commenced with great impressiveness.

Old Mrs. Cavendish listened with the deepest attention, leaning back in her easy-chair and sniffing at her bottle of ammonia.

John Lytton gave away the bride as if he were making a magnificent present at his own expense.

Emma Cavendish not only wore her mother's bridal veil, but was married with her mother's wedding ring.

Dr. Beresford Jones pronounced the benediction.

And Alden Lytton and Emma Cavendish were made one in law, as they had long been in mind and heart.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Murmur at nothing; if our ills are reparable, it is ungrateful; if remediless, it is vain.

NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1872.

REJECTED MANUSCRIPTS.—We will not return rejected manuscripts.

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◆

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ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
Corner of William and Spruce sts., New York.

A Melancholy Sight.

This is the Central Park. How beautiful it is, just putting on its fresh, new suit of bright green! And from among its budding trees we hear the notes of the first birds of spring-time. The red-winged blackbird and the robin have come.

What mean those long rows of children? Two by two, a great procession of little girls, and following them, walking also two by two, a great procession of little boys.

The exhilaration which we felt at the sight of the green lawn, and the opening buds, and the music of the birds, and the piping of the frogs, welcoming back Spring, has gone. We behold a melancholy sight. These long lines of children are all orphans! To them, even now, in their young lives, the reality of a home exists only in memory.

An artificial home, and such care as the State or some religious society can take, has been provided for them. This is well; but what is it in comparison with a true home, and living, loving parents, and brothers and sisters?

These are sad thoughts. It is impossible for any one to make good the place of a parent. We pity these orphan children.

It is one of the good things about the Central Park, that people who have not too many pleasures can sometimes enjoy a walk here. Better than all the opportunity which its drives afford for the ostentatious display of the rich, is the chance which it offers to the little children which we have just beheld to breathe the pure air, and to behold the face of nature—sweeter and kinder than any other, to children who shall behold their parents' faces no more.

And for the sake of the children especially, the collection of specimens in Natural History is valuable. They feel as if the birds and the numerous animals which they see at the Park were their friends, and take a keen delight in visiting them.

It is sad to reflect how many orphan children there are. Human benevolence cannot be directed to a higher object than that of alleviating their affliction, and promoting their happiness.

◆

Fraud! Fraud! Fraud!

Who is not tired of reading the word *Fraud*, as a heading of articles in the daily papers?

It seems as if fraud pervaded the whole atmosphere. The fact that a man holds public office of any kind is regarded as sufficient *prima facie* evidence that he has been guilty of something wrong. Investigations and trials are the order of the day.

It is not only in national affairs, but in State, municipal, county and borough governments that irregularities are almost everywhere complained of.

We suppose a good deal of this results from the loose and extravagant practices which were introduced during the war, and which are always incident to a state of war. But whatever the cause may be for such a condition of things, an end must be put to it as speedily as possible. Public offices must be restored to the respectability and dignity which formerly attached to them.

Our esteemed friend General GRANT has the power to exercise a very great salutary influence in effecting the requisite reform. We feel an earnest desire to see him use his great office to accomplish so desirable a result; and we trust that in the event of his re-election our patriotic President will "turn over a new leaf," and lay down the rule that no man who has bestowed upon him a valuable present shall be appointed to any office whatever. The effect of example in high places cannot be overestimated.

◆

The Privilege of Leap-Year.

Four young ladies, "all daughters of well-to-do farmers," send a card to the *Clay Centre* (Kansas) *Independent*, containing personal descriptions of themselves, and concluding as follows:

"We will add that we are not fortune-seekers, but girls whose heads are level, and want a husband with plenty of brains and no money, rather than with plenty of money and no brains. Work is no disgrace with us, but rather an honor, and those that have nothing to do but smoke cigars and play billiards need not reply; but your bachelors will have to be on the alert, or perhaps some Buckeye will supersede you."

◆

Child Stealing.

At Liverpool, England, a woman was convicted, recently, of stealing a little girl, four years of age, two years ago.

As soon as the child saw its mother—although so long a time had elapsed—it ran up to her, exclaiming:

"Mamma! mamma!"

The poor little thing appeared in court with a broken nose. On being interrogated on the subject, she said that the prisoner had broken it with a jug, because she refused to beg. The woman was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

◆

TOO GREAT LIBERTY.—The *Liberty* (Va.) *News* takes the liberty to appropriate several of our stories without credit to the *Ledger*.

Conservative Doctrine of Divorce.

The State of Virginia is very conservative on the subject of divorce. A recent number of the *Richmond Enquirer* says:

"In these modern days of so-called social reform, it is a fact worthy of record, and one which fully illustrates the purity of social life and the inviolable sanctity of the marriage bond in this State, that there can be found but two reported cases in all its judicial history, from the foundation of the Commonwealth down to the present time, touching questions arising out of the separation of husband and wife. And the two cases referred to were not suits for divorce, but for alimony, brought by the wife after desertion by the husband."

This is a very different state of things from that exhibited by the record of divorces in the State of Connecticut, and by the judicial history of some of the Western States, proverbial for their latitudinarian laws on the subject of marriage.

In our own Legislature a bill has been introduced constituting the fact that a wife is made "uncomfortable," or that her relations are not allowed to visit her, a sufficient ground for divorce.

Under such a law a great many wives might be rendered uncomfortable who are very comfortable now. But we apprehend the State of New York is hardly ready for such legislation yet.

Divorce is, at best, but a very imperfect remedy for an unfortunate and unhappy marriage. It does not restore the parties by any means to the condition they were in when single. If they have children, the effect upon them is a very serious matter. The marriage tie, in its very nature, is one which, in respect to its consequences, is indissoluble and indestructible. "Until death" is the law, as applied to this contract, not of man, but of God.

◆

A Senseless Custom Rebuked.

It has long been customary in criminal courts for the Judges to thank and compliment the Grand Jurors, at the close of their term, for the manner in which they have discharged their duties. The Grand Jurors, in turn, adopt resolutions complimentary to the Court and the District Attorney.

We never could see any sense in this. The judge is under no special obligation to the Grand Jury for having done that which it was their duty to do; and, on the other hand, their compliments to the Court have little significance or weight.

We are glad to see that in one instance a sensible view of this practice has been taken.

The *Albany Evening Post* says:

"It was suggested to the Grand Jury, before they were discharged, yesterday morning, that the usual complimentary resolutions to District Attorney Moak, Assistant District Attorney Conway, and the court officials, be adopted. The suggestion was strongly opposed by the District Attorney and Assistant, who said that what they had done in the interests of justice, if worthy, would meet with commendation of the public; and if it did not, the adoption of a series of meaningless resolutions would not improve the matter."

◆

A Brave Woman.

At the conclusion of a trial for attempt at highway robbery, which took place recently in England, Lord Chief-Justice Bovill paid a high compliment to the wife of the complainant, who had bravely laid hold of one of the robbers, and held him while her husband was struggling with the others. The case was as follows:

Two men were charged with attempting to commit a robbery on the highway, with violence. The prosecutor and his wife were passing along the Dover road, when they were suddenly pounced upon by three men, who seized the prosecutor, struck him, and tried to take from him his watch and chain. His wife came to his rescue, and laid hold of one of the men, her husband struggling with the others, and held him until, by her cries, the police were brought to the spot. The two other men then ran away, but one of them was stopped, and, with the man laid hold of by the wife, was secured. In the struggle, however, the robbers struck the prosecutor until he was covered with blood, and the one held by his wife struck her violently on the face until she also bled. When the police came, the robbers attacked them violently, armed with large stones, which had evidently been provided for the purpose. The prisoners were both convicted.

◆

Intelligence of Cows—Their Jealousy of Each Other.

An agricultural writer remarks that while travelling in Italy, several years ago, he happened to stop at a farm-house one afternoon, when the cows were about to be milked. He speaks as follows of the intelligence of cows:

"A herd of over one hundred were grazing homeward. The women took their position with stools and pails close to the house, and as the cows approached, names were called out, which at first we thought addressed to the milkmaids. Rosa, Florenza, Giulia, Sposa, and many names which were noted by us at the time, were called out by the overseer or one of the women, and the writer was astonished to see cow after cow cease feeding or chewing the cud, and make direct, sometimes at a trot, for the woman that usually milked her. The practice, we found, was not confined to one farm; all the cows on each farm knew their respective names, and took up their positions in the open field just as readily as the individual members of some large herds in this country turning from the fields, take up their places in the sheds."

The *Poughkeepsie Press*, speaking of this same subject—the intelligence of cows—says:

"One of our farmer subscribers recently purchased an excellent cow, and put it in the yard with others. His help went out at night to milk, as usual, and sat down before one of the other cows. No sooner, however, had he done so, than the new-comer made for him, and drove him from his seat, nor would she let him proceed with the milking. The proprietor's attention was called to the strange conduct of his new purchase, whom his man considered dangerous. Mr. P. went into the yard and began to soothe the animal with gentle handling, and then sat down to milk her, when he found her as meek as a lamb. After that she was perfectly satisfied, if she only was milked *first*, but no one must presume to slight her in this respect. She holds literally, in her own case, to the scriptural mention, that "the last shall be first."

◆

Arrested for Carrying a Missionary Basket.

A woman was observed, near London, recently, by a police-officer, to offer an apron for sale from a basket which she carried in her hand. He accosted her, and inquired what she had. She replied that it was a "missionary basket." On examination the basket was found to contain aprons and handkerchiefs.

The officer took her before the Police Court, where he preferred against her a charge of violating the Peddlers' Act. Her counsel stated that the produce of these baskets was contributed toward a fund of three quarters of a million of dollars a year, raised for spreading the Gospel among the heathen. The magistrate discharged the prisoner, holding that the Peddlers' Act did not apply to such cases.

◆

[From the Hudson (N. Y.) Star.]

Knocking an Eye Out with a Hammer.

Friday afternoon last, as a resident of South Troy was building a pig-pen, his little son was assisting. As the lad was holding up one end of a board for his father to nail at the other end, he accidentally dropped the plank, which so enraged the parent that he turned around and aimed a blow at the lad with a hammer in his hand. It struck the unfortunate boy directly in the eye, inflicting a horrible wound. The affrighted father hastened to a physician's office with his son, but was informed that the sight of the eye was lost forever.

WHISKY AS MEDICINE.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

APRIL 6th, 1872.

MR. H. W. BEECHER—If you would be so kind as to give your views in the *Ledger* on the following question, you will receive the thanks of many sufferers. My husband was taken sick, and seemed to linger for a long time under the care of his doctor, who at last advised him to get *some good whisky and take a small glass two or three times a day*, which advice has been the ruin of our family. My husband, now a common *drunkard*, previous to the doctor's advice was a very *temperate* man. Now, MR. BEECHER, do you think it right for doctors to advise the use of intoxicating drink to their patients, when it causes so much disgrace and trouble? Now this is not the only case I know of, as such advice is quite common for doctors. Several cases of late have come to my knowledge, both of men and women going astray by the use of liquor, advised and administered by doctors. Will you enlighten the doctors on such an abominable practice?

MRS. A——.

If there is any being on earth that has a right to protest against the heedless prescription of alcohol in all its modifications, it is a wife and mother!

The most eminent physiologists are divided in opinion as to the use of alcohol in medicating disease. Important investigations have been made, and are still in prosecution, in regard to the nature and uses of stimulants. Final results have not been reached, but much light has been gained. It seems likely that something will have to be surrendered by each of both extremes in the temperance cause: by those who regard alcoholic drinks as made for the health and refreshment of men, and those who regard them as poisons, and to be used only as poisons are.

But while the scientific grounds may be forming, the popular apprehension about the danger of drinking is not ill-founded.

1. Practically, it may be regarded as a thing settled, that men in health do not need alcoholic stimulants, and that the use of them is attended with innumerable risks of the most serious character; and that it is far easier to renounce and abstain *entirely*, than to indulge moderately and occasionally.

2. The prescription of alcohol by physicians is often exceedingly pernicious. It is done by some carelessly, and as an easy way of producing immediate effects without regard to future consequences.

But there are in many men latent hereditary tendencies which may be developed and set into irresistible operation by a medical use of alcohol.

There are conditions of the nervous system, and of prime organs, upon which the medical prescription of alcohol will, whatever the first favorable effects, develop a raging desire for it, that will waste the life surer than all the disease could have done for which it was prescribed.

Men are also often placed in such relations to society, to their immediate fellows, that the impulse of drinking, begun as a patient, will be strengthened and carried on by the surrounding social influences, and end in confirmed drunkenness.

While intelligent physicians may refuse to allow popular clamor to influence their deliberately formed physiological doctrines, yet we have a right to ask of them, in using alcohol in their practice, that they will take into account such considerations as we have here suggested, and look well in every case to the moral considerations as well as the medical.

◆

A LOUD WHISPER.

I suppose it is true, heterodox though it be to say so, that *old* people have faults as well as their children. It is also true that though system is a good thing, yet system *can* become a household tyrant. These two points settled, we take occasion to allude to the habit some very good and otherwise judicious parents have, of locking up the house every night precisely at the old-fashioned hour of nine, without regard to the innocent and, I think, proper wish of their *grown-up children*, that their young friends should not be driven away thus early. It is just this tightening of the cord of discipline which weakens and ultimately destroys it. Parents should think of this, and of the time when they were young themselves. I have also known a father insist upon taking his after-dinner nap in the parlor, when he might just as well have withdrawn to another room, and not compelled a painful silence from all the rest of the household for an hour or more, when his children were brimming over with innocent mirth. I think nothing is lost, but much gained, by proper concessions in these regards to the young people, whose shoulders cannot all at once be made old.

I would have home the brightest of all possible places, and this is one way to make it so. Then, instead of separate pleasures for parents and children, to me there is no lovelier sight than that of a whole family together at some place of public amusement. Many a boy and girl might now be the pride and joy of home, instead of its sorrow and shame, had this desire to give them, in an innocent form, the amusement youth craves, and *will have*, been judiciously regarded.

Then, again, some parents forbid utterly the reading of "stories" in any form. This, again, is unwise. As well might they require them to *walk* instead of *skipping*, as to choke down that natural craving for adventure and romance which is a part and parcel of youth. Better, much better, allow it, and judiciously supply it, than to have it taken, as it will be sure to be, by stealth, and indiscriminately. Do anything but offer a premium for slyness and deceit to your children.

That child is safe who has no concealments from its parents, and this, in my opinion, can never be the case when they are made ashamed of that which it is innocent for them to desire, or when it is unnecessarily and severely prohibited. Oh, how many times I have longed to whisper these things in the ears of good but mistaken parents, when I have seen the chagrin and mortification of really good and affectionate children. So I concluded to whisper aloud, in the *New York Ledger*, to those who I know will not blame my doing so, when they think of it.

FANNY FERN.

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The Phantom Train—A Watchman's Superstition.

A writer in the *Albany Evening Times* relates a conversation with a superstitious night watchman on the Central Railroad. Said the watchman:

"I believe in spirits and ghosts. I know such things exist. If you will come up in April, I will convince you." He then told of the phantom train that every year comes up the road with the body of Abraham Lincoln. Regularly in the month of April, about midnight, the air on the track becomes very keen and cutting. On either side it is warm and still. Every watchman, when he feels this air, steps off the track and sits down to watch. Soon after, the pilot engine, with long black streamers, and a band with black instruments, playing dirges, and grinning skeletons sitting all about, will pass up noiselessly, and the very air grows black. If it is moonlight, clouds always come over the moon, and the music seems to linger, as if frozen with horror. A few moments after, and the phantom train glides by. Flags and streamers hang about. The track ahead seems covered with a black carpet, and the wheels are draped with the same. The coffin of the murdered Lincoln is seen lying on the centre of a car, and all about it, in the air, and on the train behind, are vast numbers of blue-coated men, some with coffins on their backs, others leaning upon them. It seems then that all the vast armies of men who died during the war, are escorting the phantom train of the President. The wind, if blowing, dies away at once, and over all the air a solemn hush, almost stifling, prevails. If a train were passing, its noise would be drowned in the silence, and the phantom train would rise over it. Clocks and watches always stop, and when looked at, are found to be from five to eight minutes behind. Everywhere on the road, about the 20th of April, the time of watches and trains is found suddenly behind. This, said the leading watchman, was from the passage of the phantom train.

LADY-BUG.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

Lady-bug lived in a folded rose,
A petted and dainty aristocrat,
With only a thought for her gaudy clothes,
Her scarlet cloak and her velvet hat;
Her poor relations—the busy Ants—
She saw go busily travelling past,
And wondered much "why the common herd
Always hurried so—why they walked so fast.
She never did." In her folded rose
She moved about with a languid grace,
While the morning brought her sun and dew,
To anoint and polish her idle face.
The sunshine lighted her rosy room,
Perfumed and warm was the air within,
And all the span of the August days
She gathered not, neither did she spin.

And so the time of the summer past,
While provident Ants went hurrying by,
Till tempests threatened the garden queen,
And clouds went drifting across the sky.
Lady-bug crept to the rose's heart,
But found, alas! it was strangely chill;
She ventured out on a strong green leaf,
But found her world looking damp and ill.

"Along the muddy and tarnished way
Could she, a Lady-bug, walk? Not she.
She could not plod like the vulgar Ants;
Some other way there would doubtless be."

Still one by one went the rosy walls,
Worn by the tempest, and soaked with mist,
And the chilling winds whistled round about,
The sun neglected to keep its tryst.
Louder and stormier grew the blast,
The scattered leaves flitted far and wide,
Until at last not a petal pale
Bid the Lady-bug in its shelter bide.

Then she bethought her of sundry Ants,
"Who were all akin, quite a near relation;
Busy, sordid souls, but a thrifty folk,
Filling fairly their humble station.
She had kept aloof from her friends too long;
She would make amends this morning."
Alas! it was quite too late to learn
The way she had long been scorning.

* * * * * * *

All warm and dry, with winter store,
Safe in their castle lying,
The Ants knew not that Lady-bug,
Hungry and cold, was dying,
Until the storm had passed away,
And then, quite dead, they found her,
With all her chilly feet drawn up,
And faded cloak around her.

◆

GOTHAM'S STATUES.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

"What is it?"

I thought I knew the back; the voice there was no mistaking. I had heard it too often, though thirty years had since elapsed, not to know that it could belong to none but my old school-mate, Hexameter Hopkins. Hexameter, or Hex, as we abridged it, was not his real name, but one we youngsters gave him because, even then, he stood six feet in the clear. But it wasn't on account of his height that we all looked up to him. If any of us got stuck in our Virgil, or stalled in Algebra, it was always Hex that helped us out. He was the best scholar among us, as he is to-day one of the foremost in the country—though in all things pertaining to worldly wisdom, I doubt if he ever got to be much over ten years of age. That he would one day be President was our firm conviction, and the event has justified it. Hex is now, and has been for many years, President of the Ploddersdale Academy.

I was about to slap him on the back with old-time familiarity, when he repeated his question, and curiosity impelled me to listen.

"What is it?" he asked, pointing with his cotton umbrella at the mass of bell-metal, not in the likeness of anything specified in the Second Commandment, recently set up in Printing-House Square.

"That 'ere?" said the civilized young savage addressed, over whose shoulder hung a boot-black's kit—"why, that 'ere 's the chap wot stole the wouchers, a singin' 'Shoo Fly' with one hand, an' holdin' on ter the dockyments with t'other."

I couldn't bear to see my old friend made game of. So, giving young Shineemup a scowl that sent him about his business, I stepped forward, and grasping Hex by the hand,

"How are you, old boy!" I exclaimed.

Hex had evidently read the caution, "BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS," for he drew back suspiciously. But as past memories gradually smoothed out the lines imprinted by twenty years of city life, my face all of a sudden came back to him.

"What!—is that you, Jim?" he said, giving my hand a wrench I devoutly wished had been bestowed instead on the unoccupied one of the brazen figure before us.

In thirty seconds, questions and answers had been put and given covering the events of as many years, after which Hex, with his old pertinacity, returned to his mutton.

"What the Dahak—" Dahak is Persian for "Old Harry," and the only one of his many *aliases* Hex was ever known to use—

"What the Dahak *is* it?" he asked, pointing to the object of his former inquiry.

"The statue of Benjamin Franklin," I answered.

Hex, whose ideas of art were all derived from the Greeks, was plainly nonplussed.

"What is he doing with his hand?" he inquired.

I confessed my inability to tell, unless Shineem's explanation was correct.

"Why didn't they give him his crab-tree walking-stick to hold, or the crank of an electrical machine to turn?" continued Hex.

"Or fix a metallic kite on the top of the City Hall, with a string of telegraph wire extending to his hand?" I added.

"The very thing!" said Hex; "and it might be done yet at trifling expense."

Having relieved our minds on the statue, and commended Mr. Greeley's good taste in wishing to be dead before being served so, we started across the Park toward Broadway.

"What ruin is that?" asked Hex, as we came opposite the new Court House.

It piqued me to hear our costliest public edifice called a ruin, and, resolved to give Hex a better opinion of it, I invited him in.

Conducting him through the crowd into one of the court-rooms, I handed him a five-hundred-dollar chair, and taking another, proceeded to descant on the magnificence around us.

The carpet under our feet, I assured Hex, was worth fifty dollars a yard, and the glass in the windows at least as much a pane. The curtains, which Hex said looked like hotel towels on rollers, he was astonished to learn, had been estimated, by good judges, at three hundred dollars a piece.

My voice rising with my enthusiasm, the Judge rapped silence with his two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar mallet, whereupon we ceased talking, and gave our attention to what was going on, which we found no small difficulty in comprehending. As nearly as we could make it out, they were trying the last Grand Jury for a breach of the Riot Act, or some such matter. The proceedings were very tedious, and we didn't stop long.

Sauntering up Broadway, we at length reached Union Square, where Hex called a halt.

"Who might *that* be?" he inquired, turning to look at the bronze statue of Washington on our right.

"It *might* be worse," said Hex, when I had answered his question; "but I *do* wish artists would quit giving Washington that look as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. It's a libel on the man, who was far too good and sensible to have a particle of the supersanctimonious about him."

I fully agreed with Hex, and told him that Houdon's statue, modelled from life, which I had once had the pleasure of seeing, corroborated his opinion.

"But what is the Father of his Country's horse shying at?" said Hex; "and what is it the rider seems to be motioning out of the way? Oh! I see," he continued, "and it's enough to frighten any horse."

And what do you think it was that explained to Hex the General's warning attitude, and the pricking up of his charger's ears? Simply the statue of Mr. Lincoln, aptly denominated his second murder, which stands on the other side of the Square!

For the honor of our city I hurried Hex away.

Thinking to soothe his feelings, I invited him to go and see Julius Cæsar; but he said he had seen it once in the country, and had been so shocked at the inconsistency of making Brutus and Cassius speak in a tongue they had never heard of, to say nothing of the absurdity of making Roman soldiers out of stage supes in tin breeches, carrying pot-lids for bucklers, that he couldn't think of undergoing the torture a second time. He added that if a city was to be judged by its public statues, which is the true classic rule, he had seen enough of New York.

I told him that several of our distinguished citizens had had themselves "done" on private account, and I hoped to be able to show him something better to-morrow. But Hex had evidently lost confidence. At the door of his hotel he bade me a melancholy adieu, announcing his intention to leave by the early train.

And so I lost the pleasure of a prolonged visit from my old friend, and all for the want of an ordinance in our city for the better regulation of graven images.

Will not the Committee of Seventy see to this?

◆

Woman versus Sewing Machines.

Man invented the sewing machine, the most inestimable blessing, the most delightful time-saving affair that a woman could have dreamt of. One hour's work done in fifteen minutes! a day's toil finished in three hours! So we rejoiced and learned to operate, and laughed at our grandmothers for their old-fashioned stitching and overhanding, and set to work to undo the good that had been done us as speedily as possible.

Fashion waved her wand and Vanity did the powwowing, and lo and behold! tucks appeared upon the scene—tucked petticoats, tucked waists, tucked dresses, tucked overskirts. It takes six times as long to tuck a skirt with a mean little half dozen rows of tucks, as it does to hem it. Put two clusters of tucks, and you can hem and trim four skirts by hand in the same space of time. And we must have our old number all the same; all our garments exactly as before. And we toil from dawn until dusk to make a row of lines upon the edges of habiliments seldom seen by mortal eye, or down the backs and up the sleeves of others, which might be ironed and washed by the ordinary incumbent of the kitchen, were they made plain, but which, under the circumstances, must go to the laundry.

Tucks, tucks, tucks, clusters and rows, bias and perpendicular, as well as horizontal! Whoso passeth basement windows, or looketh up to second floor bedrooms, will often see pale, wretched, anxious little women who seem, save for a difference in attire, to be the well-known heroines of the "Song of the Shirt," tucking white muslin. Not the underpaid seamstress or the unhappy workgirl, but the well-to-do lady of the house, determined to have as many clusters of tucks in her under garments as the lady next door has! And did not last week's wash exhibit four clusters, of twelve tucks each, in that enviable personage's garments?

The garments are no whiter, no smoother, nor do they fit better; but it would be so horrible not to have any tucks in one's wardrobe, and a seamstress charges so much, and so you hear the whir all day; and as machine work kills sooner than hand work, if carried to the same extent, doubtless many die of it. There are little girls who have a fine tucked wardrobe which they will outgrow in a year, and no mother to make any more, because of those very tucks.

There are hosts of little babies that did not live to be christened, and whose graves are just big enough for the little vases of flowers that stand upon them, who might have been great bouncing boys, but for that tucked wardrobe of elfin robes and wraps, of which they only wore the garment that moulders in the grave with them. And I know more than one woman who is tucking health and bloom, perhaps life away, not for bread's sake, but just for a sort of mysterious vanity that no man could understand—just that Cousin Sally, and perhaps *his* second wife, may say of her, "What a woman she was! Twelve tucks on everything."

MARY KYLE DALLAS.

◆

Condition of Laborers in England—A Sad Story.

The *London Telegraph* publishes the following "Story of an Essex Laborer:"

"SIR—I, George Hodge, cannot write or read, but a neighbor has read me your remarks on laborers' wages, and I have asked him to write you a true statement of my condition, which is a fair specimen of many others hereabout. I am 29 years of age, married, with three children. I have worked for the same master fifteen years. I have earned 18d. per day, and been at work ten hours every day. I am what is known as a general laborer. I dig, fence, fell, or spread manure—sometimes sprats that have not seen water for many months. My eldest child is a boy, 7 years old, and he earns nothing. My second is a girl; she earns about 2d. per week. My youngest is a girl, and, thank the Lord, they are three good children. My wife is a very hard-working woman, and earns about 2s. per week—God bless her!

My food is, generally, a bread and water mess for breakfast, and if we have it, a cold potato. My wife and children have the same. My dinner is a boiled dumpling, with potatoes and onions in it. My supper—a bit of bread, cup of tea, and a tiny bit of cheese—if we have it—and, for a treat, an onion. We can never get beef or mutton, but sometimes a pig's pluck—say six times in the year. I never was too late to commence my work at the proper time, and I never was complained of by my master. I was never before a magistrate for any fault. I have many times been obliged to lose a day's pay because of the bad weather, and I have often suffered from hunger and cold.

I put my mark to this, as I hereby declare it is the truth.

GEORGE + (his mark.)

◆

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN IN ENGLAND.—A bill has been introduced into the British Parliament which proposes that no child shall be employed in agriculture under the age of eight, and that from eight to twelve no farmer shall employ such child unless he produces a certificate of having made a certain number of school attendances in the previous twelve months.

◆

—He that does good to another man, does also good to himself; not only in the consequence, but in the very act of doing it; for the conscience of well-doing is a very ample reward.

◆

—Love sees what no eye sees; love hears what no ear hears; and what never rose in the heart of man, love prepares for its object

◆

Doesn't Want Her to be Happy.

"My son," said a good mother to her young hopeful, "did you wish your teacher a happy New-year?" "No, ma'am," responded the boy. "Well, why not?" "Because," said the youth, "she isn't happy unless she 's whipping some of us boys, and I was afraid if I wished her happiness she 'd go for me."

◆

[From the Norway (Maine) Advertiser.]

SYLVANUS COBB, JR., has been a regular contributor to the New York *Ledger* for twenty years or more, during which time he has written something like one hundred serials, and countless numbers of short sketches. He is, probably, as well and widely known as any other author in this country. He claims Norway as his native place, and Norway is happy in claiming him as a distinguished son.

He was and is still beloved by all who know him here. Some refreshing glimpses of his kindness of heart and sympathetic nature are seen in his letters (*in memoriam*) of his old friend Ben. Greely which were published in last week's *Advertiser*. His great heart is ever ready to flow out in kindness and sympathy for the stricken and unfortunate.

THE BRIDE’S STORY.

BY THOMAS DUNN ENGLISH.

When I was but a country lass, now fifteen years ago,
I lived where flows the Overprock through meadows wide and low;
There first, when skies were bending blue and blossoms blowing free,
I saw the ragged little boy who went to school with me.

His homespun coat was frayed and worn, with patches covered o’er;
His hat—ah! such a hat as that was never seen before!
The boys and girls, when first he came, they shouted in their glee,
And jeered the ragged little boy who went to school with me.

His father was a laboring man, and mine was highly born;
Our people held both him and his in great contempt and scorn—
They said I should not stoop to own a playmate such as he,
The bright-eyed, ragged little boy who went to school with me.

Yet, spite of all the sneers around from children better drest,
My heart went out to meet the heart that beat within his breast.
His look was fond, his voice was low, and strange as it may be,
I loved the ragged little boy who went to school with me.

For years they had forgotten him, but when again we met,
His looks, his voice, his gentle ways remained in memory yet;
They saw alone the man of mark, but I could only see
The bright-eyed, ragged little boy who went to school with me.

He had remembered me, it seemed, as I remembered him;
Nor time, nor honors, in his mind the cherished past could dim;
Young love had grown to older love, and so today you see
I wed the ragged little boy that went to school with me.

◆

MARK HEBER’S LUCK;

OR,

Life on the Plains.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF “THE BOY MAGICIAN,” “RED KNIFE,” “THE BROKEN HOME,” “EDDY’S SEARCH,” “THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR,” ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

CARRIED AWAY INTO THE WILDERNESS.

The evening came on bright with moonlight and starlight, and full of the mysterious sweetness that broods tenderly over the infinite plains, long before the party of savages having Gay Heber in charge, and the larger party of Sioux warriors under the leadership of the Devil Chief, otherwise Blue Jack, came together.

Blue Jack came on in advance of his followers, among whom was Burk, wild of aspect, the tall plumes above his head nodding, and his voice came to Gay’s captors from afar off, with the clear high tones of a trumpet, demanding:

“What success?”

The half-breed lad whose treachery had brought about Gay’s capture, arose in his stirrups, and sent back a wild cry of exultation, so shrill and piercing it seemed to cleave the still air like a knife.

Then the girl’s captors swerved aside upon their steeds, revealing the young captive in their midst.

A shout of joy broke from the oncoming warriors, in which the Devil Chief joined, his voice rising high above the rest.

Both parties continued to advance, slackening their speed as they drew nearer, and met at last in the midst of the great plains, and close beside a running stream—a branch of the Pawnee Loup, or Wolf river.

Greetings were exchanged in the Dacota tongue; the savages of both parties dismounted, and Blue Jack came forward and seized the girl’s bridle, and looked up into her face with devilish triumph.

“So I’ve got you at last!” he cried, his sinister eyes glowing. “You have made me plenty of trouble from first to last, Gay Heber; you have cost me the lives of many brave warriors; but I am repaid for all. I have got you at last!”

Gay shrank back from him, in alarm and aversion.

He wore no longer the long beard in which he had disguised himself as Lieut. Fallon. His hair fell down around his neck in the long locks such as Indians wear; his face was bare, and one cheek was covered with a hideous discoloration like the blue mark left by a bruise. This discoloration it was that had given to him, among the whites, the appellation of Blue Jack. But it was not the hideous scar, nor was it the black, piercing, sinister eyes, nor the thick, sensual lips and ugly mouth, that made him terrible in the eyes of Gay Heber. It was the bold, wicked spirit that mocked at her from every feature of his face—the base, malevolent soul, for which no crime would be too horrible, no wickedness too daring.

He smiled derisively as Gay shrank from him, and cutting her bonds with his knife, he lifted her to the ground, saying:

“You can have the freedom of the camp for an hour or two. You cannot get away, so don’t attempt it.”

He let her go, and she wandered away down to the water’s edge, and bathed her face and hands; while the savages picketed their horses within range of grass and water, and built a great fire, the first that Gay had seen since leaving the fort.

The party under the Devil Chief had brought in buffalo and antelope meat, freshly killed, and the process of roasting the flesh in the fire was speedily undertaken.

Gay was weary, and aching in every bone; her limbs were stiff, and a feverish thirst possessed her. She wandered along the edge of the creek, the eyes of the half-breed lad following her movements with the gaze of a basilisk nearly every moment. There was not the faintest chance of escape, but the change of motion and the freedom of her limbs refreshed her, and she did not sit down until Blue Jack peremptorily summoned her to a seat beside himself, upon the bank of the creek under a tree.

She obeyed, approaching and sitting down in the place indicated by her enemy.

Blue Jack offered her roasted meat, and brought from a hamper that had been strapped upon the back of one of his led horses, a bottle of wine and some crackers, or hard biscuits.

Gay refused the wine, but ate some of the crackers and meat. Blue Jack helped himself copiously to the contents of the bottle, regarding the young girl the while with a strange and fixed intentness.

“You have changed since I first saw you, Gabrielle,” he said abruptly. “You look older and more womanly, and yet you have not lost your child face.”

He might well say that she had changed. She was thin and pale and sorrowful, with great brown eyes seeming twice their normal size, and dusky with the shadows of deep anxieties and apprehensions; but under the weight of all her woe, under her woman’s sorrows, under the pallor and terrors, the young face still retained its bright child likeness, and the arch loveliness that had distinguished it from babyhood, and which it would never lose, even in old-age.

“It is surprising that I should have changed, isn’t it?” asked Gay, with uncontrollable irony. “The attack made by you and your friends on the fort; the trouble you’ve made us; this last act of stealing me by treachery from my home; this journeying by day and night, through the burning hot sun and chilling wind: all these are mere incidents, as pleasant in character, that you expect me to look jolly over them. It’s a wonder I don’t.”

“I didn’t expect you to look jolly,” said Blue Jack, a little puzzled, “but I did think you would be in a different mood from this. You seem to be more angry than afraid.”

“You seem to understand the art of reading people correctly,” said Gay coolly.

“Are you not afraid of me?” asked the outlaw.

“Certainly. I’m afraid of you and your friends exactly as I would be afraid of a den of rattlesnakes.”

Blue Jack did not seem flattered. He frowned, and ate his meat in silence. At last he spoke again:

“I’m sorry I couldn’t have had Mark Heber here to keep you company. I expected to find him with you, and it was quite a disappointment to hear that he had escaped my designs.”

“Don’t fret, Mr. Blue Jack,” said Gay composedly. “You’ll see Mark Heber as soon as you want to—yes, and before you want to. Mark Heber is as anxious to meet you, as you possibly can be to meet him.”

Blue Jack bit his lips.

“My warriors here are wild to capture him,” he said. “It’ll be a great day among the Dacotas when Mark Heber is put to the torture.”

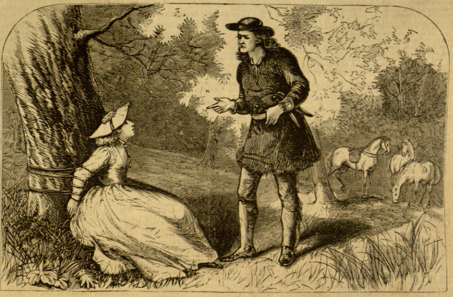
“You will never live to see that day,” declared Gay recklessly. “Mark Heber has gone to Fort McPherson for soldiers, and they will pursue you and your friends. I shall be rescued—”

“We’ll see about that,” interrupted the Devil Chief, with a smile of deadly significance. “They will not find you, my dear young lady. You will never go back to Mark Heber alive!”

By this time both had finished their meal. Blue Jack called to the half-breed lad to bring him the thongs that had bound the captive, which was done. With his own hands Blue Jack bound the young girl, and secured her to the tree under which she was seated.

Then he sauntered away, leaving the captive to herself. He conversed with Gay’s captors, and held a brief council with his entire band. An hour or so later, both the savage parties being fatigued, they lay down to sleep, having first posted an Indian sentinel.

Blue Jack flung himself down upon the ground with the rest, but as they lapsed readily into slumber, he presently rose up and approached Gay, who sat upon the bank nearly immovable, her head resting against the trunk of the tree to which she was bound.



GAY HEBER A CAPTIVE IN THE POWER OF BLUE JACK.

“Asleep?” asked Blue Jack abruptly.

The young girl raised her drooping head, and looked at her enemy with wide-open eyes.

“I want to have a little talk with you,” said Blue Jack. “This time is as good as any. The Indians are asleep.”

He flung himself down on the ground at her feet, raising his head upon his elbow, and staring up into her pale, wan face.

“It’s about yourself,” he continued, as she did not reply to him. “I want to know all that you can tell me about yourself. You have never denied that you were Mark Heber’s sister, but you have never affirmed that you are. Now I ask you again, are you really the sister of young Heber?”

“And I answer you again,” returned Gay coolly, “by referring you to Mark Heber for an answer to your inquiries.”

“I know that you are not his sister,” said the outlaw, scowling. “He is fair, with blue eyes and fair hair. You have a clear dark skin, with brown eyes and black hair, and are as unlike him in appearance as can be. You never sprang from the same stock with him. Your very name of Gabrielle shows that a different taste presided over your naming from that which gave young Heber the stern, crisp name of Mark. You are not his sister—and I know who you are.”

In spite of her efforts at self-control, Gay started, and her face flushed with eagerness.

Blue Jack saw it, and smiled strangely.

“If you would like to know who you are,” he said, “I will tell you.”

The girl nodded her little head, dumbly.

“You confess then that you are not Heber’s sister?”

“I confess nothing,” answered Gay haughtily. “I have not said that I am not Mark Heber’s sister. The supposition that I am not is a suspicion of your own for which I am not responsible. But I am willing to listen to what you have to say, Mr. Blue Jack.”

“Very well. Then listen. Some years ago—over thirteen years, to be exact—there lived in an Eastern State a happy household, consisting of several members. The husband adored his wife and two children, one a fine boy of three years and the other a mere baby, a girl. The wife also loved her husband. She possessed a finely strung temperament, a keenly nervous organization, a vivid imagination and excitable disposition, with all the noble qualities of mind and heart that go to make home happy. She was gentle, bright, arch, spirituelle. She was a beauty and a belle. Her social position was high, and she was a leader of fashion, witty, charming, yet a very home angel. Her name was Gabrielle.”

Gay’s lips quivered. She knew that she was listening to a description of her own mother.

“The children were the idols of their mother,” continued Blue Jack thoughtfully. “The boy was very precocious, and was especially dear to her. Well, one day the boy was killed. It was an accident, of course. I protest it was an accident,” and his voice rose, and his face flushed, as if Gay had contradicted the assertion. “I was riding a vicious horse in the grounds, and the boy was in my path. I did not see him, and ran over him, crushing in his baby skull. I protest that I never intended to harm the boy. I was as shocked as any one. I leaped down and carried him to the house. She met me at the door—Gabrielle—her face whiter than the whiteness of her dress, and she called me a murderer—her boy’s murderer!”

He shivered, as if he lived over again the scene he was describing.

“It happened that there was a fortune which, in the event of these children’s deaths, would one day come to me,” said Blue Jack, his dark features working. “*She* remembered this fact, and believed that I had killed her boy from design. She took up the little figure in her arms and called upon God to punish the child’s murderer. And then, with a wild shriek, she fell to the floor in convulsions. When she came to herself again, her reason was upset—destroyed. The day after the funeral she stole her baby girl out of its nursery, and fled with her. We searched for the helpless pair—we advertised for them—but no one had seen a crazy woman wandering about the country with a child in her arms, and from that day until I met you in the wagon train, I never found the slightest clue to her or the child. We had reason to suppose that she had drowned herself in the East river, with her baby. But there were times when I, and I alone, believed her or the child living. For years I have had a presentiment that I should some day find her, or you. Gabrielle, you are the child of that crazy wandering lady!”

Gay’s heart thrilled with a terrible agitation.

“Is your name Edmund?” she asked.

The outlaw started, his eyes flashing with sudden fear of her.

“Yes,” he answered, as if unconsciously, forgetful of caution in his anxiety. “How do you happen to know my name? Is your mother still living? Did she come to her senses? You know her history from herself?”

“I decline to answer your questions,” answered Gay, recovering herself.

“You must answer me. Girl, I was the husband of that unhappy woman,” and the outlaw’s voice faltered, and his eyes fell. “She fled from me because she was mad. Her death made me desperate, and I came out to the West and became the desperado I am. Had she lived, I should not have been the man I am. And at the East now I have wealthy, honored friends, a fair name, a good home, if I choose to dwell in it. No one there links the name of Edmund —— with that of Blue Jack.”

“What is your name besides Edmund?”

“That you will never know,” said the outlaw. “That name is unsullied, and one who has known me as Blue Jack cannot know me under any other name, excepting my Indian title of Devil Chief. I am a graduate of Harvard College, of good family—that is all you can ever know of me. Now answer my questions. Is your mother living?”

“I am of as good family as yourself—‘that is all you can ever know of me,’” retorted Gay, her face flushing. “Where there is reticence on one side, there must be on the other.”

“Girl,” cried the outlaw, leaning still nearer to her and fairly hissing the words between his clenched teeth, “*I am your father!*”

He had expected Gay to betray agitation, excitement, incredulity, at this announcement. He did not know that the young girl had long entertained a secret conviction that such was the relationship existing between them. He was surprised, therefore, when she looked at him with haughty brown eyes and curling lips, replying:

“You needn’t taunt me with what is more my misfortune than my fault, Mr. Blue Jack, if your words are true. You cannot expect me to be proud of a father whose hand is against every man, and against whom every man’s hand is stretched. You are a Cain—an Ishmaelite—a white savage, worse than the red-skins. Allow me to hope that I resemble my unfortunate mother, or that there was a period in your life, as you say, when you were not all evil.”

“And you will not even tell me if my poor Gabrielle is living?”

“I have not yet said that I am the child of the poor wandering insane lady,” said Gay. “And I won’t say so. I will never own you for a father. A father! You wild wolf of the plains! You attack the settlements of the white people—your own race; you make war on women and children; you burn houses; you resort to the worst modes of savage warfare. No doubt you scalp your victims just as your friends do. You must mourn for the lost Gabrielle, for I hear that you have an Indian wife in your wigwam. Your attempt to get possession of me has been one course of treachery and cruelty and warfare. You might have killed me when you attacked the block-house. Your fatherly tenderness, it seems to me, looks more like a fear of me. You hate me. I’ve read your hatred from the first. You never spoke a kind word to me. You would be glad to see me dead at this moment.”

A sudden gleam shone in Blue Jack’s eyes, which Gay marked and understood.

“I am in your way,” she said, with a power in her clear voice that startled her enemy. “I stand between you and something you want. You say that the lives of two children, of whom you believe me to be one, stood between you and a great fortune. The boy died. I think, as the poor lady did, that you were quite capable of killing him. You believe me to be the girl, and you mean to get me out of the way as effectually as you removed the boy. Is this not so?”

Her steady eyes watched the scarred, evil face of the outlaw. His nerves flinched, his mouth twitched nervously. His countenance declared that she had probed his guilty soul, and brought to light at least a fragment of the truth.

“Now I have something else to say to you,” said Gay clearly and resolutely. “Whatever I may have thought, Mr. Blue Jack, in the past, I now know one thing—you are not my father! I have studied your face to-night, and you have told me a lie. The wandering lady was not your wife. Her child was not your daughter. That child, like her young brother, stood between you and a fortune. You believe me to be that child. Believe what you will; but, so surely as God hears me, I KNOW that I am not your child! There is some mystery I cannot comprehend—something I cannot fathom, try as I may—but I say again I am not your daughter. My soul, my instincts, revolt against you—Nature speaks within me. Whoever and whatever I may be, I know, so surely as God lives, that you are not my father!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEAR THE JOURNEY’S END.

The interview between the Devil Chief and Gay Heber, as may be supposed, was not prolonged after Gay’s clear exposition of her sentiments toward him. He rose up furious with wrath, and muttering oaths that made the brave little creature tremble, and went back to his place upon the ground, stretching out his Herculean figure beside the form of Burk.

Gay leaned her head against the trunk of the tree, and looked up at the starry sky with a heart suddenly relieved of a burden she had found almost beyond her strength to bear

For she had believed the outlaw Blue Jack to be her father—had believed it in deadly shrinking, in anguish, in horror. And now had come upon her soul, with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, the conviction that her life had never sprung from his—that he might be akin to her—that some terrible mystery enshrouded his past and hers; but that he was not her father.

How the conviction had found birth, she could not say. Some sudden revelation of Blue Jack’s soul in his glances—some cruel treachery in the smile on his thick lips—some token of falseness in his tones or manner—any of these might have warned her. But it is as likely, as she herself had said, that Nature had spoken out within her, and told her the truth beyond all possibility of doubting, and Gay Heber knew, without need of proofs, that the man who had persecuted her like a bitter enemy was not the author of her being.

“He is the ‘Edmund’ from whom my mother fled,” she thought, looking upward. “If he is not my father, who is he? He may be my uncle. He might be my guardian. I wonder if I shall ever know the truth. I wonder what he will do with me.”

These speculations occupied her young soul for hours. It was long past midnight when her heavy eyelids drooped upon the pale cheeks, and the little dusky head with its short tresses of cropped hair fell forward upon her bosom, and she slept.

While she was busy with her thoughts, Blue Jack was not less occupied. He tossed restlessly to and fro, and muttered curses and drew heavy sighs, and was at last startled by the low, subdued voice of Burk at his elbow, demanding:

“What is it, Cap’n? Are you in love, or in trouble?”

Blue Jack turned over at once, glad of some one to speak to, it seemed.

“I thought you were asleep,” he said.

“No,” replied Burk. “I’ve been awake all the time, Cap’n. And, Cap’n, I heard what you told the girl!”

“The devil! Well, I don’t know as it matters if you did, Burk,” said the outlaw chief, more coolly. “It’s all true, every word of it. She’s my daughter, Burk, as sure as I’m alive, so help me!”

“I’ve suspicioned it before,” said Burk. “You and she don’t look no more alike than a peach and a codfish, meaning no disrespect, Cap’n, but, after all, there’s a sort of family resemblance, so to speak, though I can’t tell where it lays. She’s pretty enough, Cap’n, and awful high strung.”

“Just like her mother,” muttered Blue Jack.

“She don’t seem to have much idee of duty and filial affection,” remarked Burk. “She hates you, Cap’n, worse ’n pizen. She can’t bear the idee of having an outlaw for a father. You’ll have trouble with her yet, Cap’n, ’thout you break her in early. How old is she?”

“Fifteen years.”

“A young woman then, though she looks like a child in her face. What are you going to do with her, Cap’n? Send her to Omaha to school along of your other daughter, her sister?”

“Her schooling days are over,” said Blue Jack grimly. “I am going to take her up into the Sioux country. I haven’t quite decided what to do with her. I think I’ll make a squaw of her.”

“Wish I hadn’t a wife a’ready,” sighed Burk. “I’ve took a regular shine to her. But which is *is!* She’ll have plenty of admirers up in the Sioux villages, but it’s a sort o’ pity to waste her on a savage, Cap’n. You’ll back out of that undertaking.”

“We’ll see. I hate the girl, Burk. I wish she were dead. But there is something so innocent about her that I shrink from getting rid of her as I have got rid of people before. It will end, I suppose, though, in putting her out of the way.”

“She’ll be buried alive as the wife of some brave,” said Burk. “The warriors seem discontented, Cap’n. Anything wrong?”

“Yes, they are angry because they lost so many men at the two-river settlement, and gained nothing. They demand plunder. They wondered that I should risk so much to get possession of a mere girl, until I told them that she is my daughter. They are anxious to be on the war-path, and I have been compelled to promise them that I will lead them in an attack upon a wagon train directly after the girl is safe in the Dacota villages.”

“That’ll be the third wagon train plundered since May,” observed Burk, “if we do plunder it.”

“I was due at Denver a month ago,” said Blue Jack discontentedly. “I suppose I have letters lying there from Omaha—from my daughter there. It is her vacation now, and no doubt she’s lonely, and longs to see me.”

“Is that daughter like this one?” asked Burk.

“No; she’s older. She’s as handsome as a queen ought to be. She’s the apple of my eye, Burk. If there’s any good in me, it’s my love for her. I’d die to secure her happiness. She’s the only being I ever loved, and she loves me devotedly. She thinks me perfect. She believes me to be a great land speculator out in Colorado, and I wouldn’t have her know who and what I am for all the world. She’s proud as Lucifer, and I’m proud of her!” added Blue Jack, his face softening, and a tender light glowing in his hard, metallic eyes. “Yes, Burk, if there’s a bit of good in me, it’s my love for her—my beauty!”

There was a brief silence between the pair, broken by Burk, who said:

“Do you think the soldiers will come up after us?”

“I dare say. Let them come. We are safe now. I am more anxious about the discontented warriors than about pursuers. I’ll tell you, Burk. I’ve got it. I’ll kill several birds with one stone. In the morning, I’ll divide the party into two again, and send each party in different directions, to throw any pursuers off their guard. I’ll take the five warriors and Mishko, the half-breed lad, and Gay, and push on into Dakota. You can take the twenty warriors and lead them against the first wagon-train you meet between Kearney City and Fort McPherson, going either east or west. You are sure to get horses and stock, a little money, more or less, and the trinkets the savages like. I’ll send down twenty more warriors to reinforce you, if you wish. These braves are all well-armed, and have extra horses. What do you say?”

“It’s a good idee, Cap’n. I’ll go with the braves. I’ll join some train at Kearney City, or McPherson, and find out all about the money on the train, before the Sioux attack us on the road. That game always works well, and pays handsomely. If the soldiers come up so far north as the spot we’re at now, they’ll see two trails divide here, and won’t know which to take. We’ll make a good haul out of some train, and the warriors will come home again in high feather.”

There was further discussion to the same effect, but the decision of Blue Jack remained unchanged. It only remained to carry it into execution.

The camp was aroused at daybreak. A fire was kindled, and meat was cooked and eaten. Gay Heber had roasted meat, with a burned, smoked flavor, hard biscuits and water, and she ate heartily, determined not to give way to repining until her destiny was fixed beyond all power to alter it.

After the meal, the warriors, in obedience to a sign from the Devil Chief, squatted around the fire gravely, and Blue Jack, sitting among them, after their own fashion, said, in their tongue:

“The warriors of the Dacotas have had losses since the seed-time, at the settlement on the two rivers. The Red Fox, the Big Buffalo, the Little Wolf, and others of our braves, perished in the fights. Their bodies are buried in the white men’s ground, and the spirit of the Dacota is sore. He wants revenge. He went back to the lodges of his people, and the women of his nation smiled when they looked upon his empty hands. He brought home no horses, no stock, no plunder of any sort. He left behind him some of the choicest of his braves. The Dacota wants revenge!”

The dull eyes of the savages squatted around the fire brightened. One of them, speaking for the rest, said:

“The Devil Chief speaks wisdom. He has read the hearts of his people.”

“The trains of the white men, with horses, wagons, and stock, trail over the prairie like long serpents,” continued Blue Jack. “They are the rightful prey of the Indian. They are rich in the things the Indians like. They have rifles and ammunition, whiskey and tobacco. The Indian has only to help himself. The Dacota is brave. Let him plunder the wagon train, and forget the losses at the two rivers. Let him return to his nation with full hands, and the women of his people shall sing his praises.”

“The Devil Chief talks good talk,” said another brave briefly.

“The let the Dacota swoop to the southward upon the wagon train like a vulture upon his prey,” said Blue Jack. “Burk will go with you. The Red Adder shall lead the party. Let his sting be deadly! The Devil Chief will go on to the villages of his people with the party who took captive the daughter of the Devil Chief, and the Dacotas will come home covered with glory and their hands filled with plunder. Is not this so?”

The warriors gravely assented.

“Then mount,” said Blue Jack, “and go your ways. I’ll go mine.”

The council broke up, and the horses were made ready for the journey. Gay Heber was placed in her saddle, and bound to her horse. Blue Jack thrust his arm through her bridle. The savages all mounted. A few last words were spoken, and the party broke into twain, twenty warriors under the Red Adder, and accompanied by Burk, going in a south-easterly direction, upon their way to attack some unfortunate wagon train.

The Devil Chief, accompanied by the half-breed lad Mishko, or Lem., as Gay still called him, and the five warriors who had captured her, and leading Gay’s horse, struck out in the direction of the north-east and the villages of the Dacotas.

“Mark will see where the parties separate,” thought Gay, “and how will he know with which party I am? Perhaps they have separated to divide his party, and to puzzle him.”

She thought of tearing her handkerchief into strips, and flinging them upon the flat prairie soil as she swept onward, but the idea was by no means practicable. In the first place, her hands were tied. In the second place, the wind would blow away every shred so far that the pursuers would probably never get a single glimpse of them. Gay smiled, even in her trouble, as she thought:

“I remind myself of the man who had twenty-seven good reasons for not taking his wife somewhere or other with him. His first reason was, he had no wife. That reason sufficed without the rest. I’d tear up my handkerchief if my hands were free, and if Blue Jack would allow me time to attach them to shrubs, and if there were any shrubs to attach them to. One reason would do without the others.”

She sighed and smiled.

“You don’t seem to take your captivity very much to heart, Gay,” said Blue Jack.

“Why should I?” inquired Gay, with seeming composure. “As the song says, ‘it’s only for a day.’ Any how, it’s sure to be short, and I am seeing the country. I should quite enjoy the ride if I had decent company, and if I didn’t know that Mark and the soldiers must get tired on the long trail.”

“You seem to be sure they are following you. But the soldiers don’t go at everybody’s beck and call. They’ve had one long march after us already, and they won’t care for another. The settlers won’t turn out again. They’re too uncommon fond of their families and their scalps. However, Gay, I dare say your friends will come up into the Sioux country with half the United States army at their backs. The trouble will be, after they come, to find you.” And his lips wreathed themselves in a cruel smile.

Gay did not reply to him. She knew very well that, the war of the Rebellion being in progress, there were no soldiers to spare upon the frontier, the forces being as small as practicable; and she knew also, that in the excitement of the great war, the outrages committed by Indians in the Territories would be simply designated as “Indian troubles,” and that very possibly Mark Heber’s appeal to the soldiers to aid him in his search for Gay might be allowed to pass unheeded, in the press of other excitements at the Fort. In short, a feeling of depression was succeeding to Gay’s original hopefulness.

“But Mark will follow me, if he has to come alone," she thought proudly. "Mark will never desert me."

The Devil Chief and his little party pushed on with energy all that day. At nightfall they encamped upon the plains, and Gay Heber was bound hand and foot as usual, and one of the party remained on guard.

The next day they continued their journey.

The sun was very hot by day, and the nights were cool to chilliness. The Indians killed some game, which the party roasted and put up into their pouches for future consumption. They also found some berries, which were given to Gay, who was feverish and chilly by turns, and whose fatigue had now become excessive. The half-breed lad now and then addressed some word to the young captive, but the other Indians rarely if ever spoke to her. Blue Jack was also moody at times, and silent to sullenness. More than once Gay found his eyes fixed upon her in a gaze that made her inwardly tremble, it was so deadly and murderous.

Day after day of rapid journeying through the hot sunshine, from daybreak to nightfall, stopping only at noon to rest upon the plain, or on the bank of a creek, passed by, and night after night was spent in bivouacs on the hard ground, with the root of a tree or a stone for a pillow, and the starlit sky for a roof to shelter them.

They crossed the Great Sand Hills in Northern Nebraska, and plunged into *Les Mauvaises Terres*, or Bad Lands, in Southern Dakota.

And now their close watch upon young Gay Heber was permitted to relax. They took care to afford her not the slightest chance of escape, but they permitted her to have the freedom of the camp; she could walk about at noon and at night; she could pick berries for herself where any were to be found; and her hands were no longer bound during her rides by day, nor her feet secured during the halts by night.

The guards were kept up at night with unremitting vigilance, but no sign of pursuit was once seen.

The journey soon grew to be to poor Gay one long and horrible nightmare. She longed for rest with a feverish longing. She slept but little at night, and sometimes dozed in her saddle in the hot sun by day, through sheer weakness. Once or twice at night, and once at noon, she had thought of attempting an escape, and had crept up toward the horses, only to hear the mocking voice of Blue Jack at her side, or to feel the grasp of the half-breed lad upon her arm. Escape was impossible.

The Bad Lands were crossed, and now the Indians brightened and seemed impatient at every halt. Their manner declared that they were near their journey's end.

"The girl's nearly worn out," muttered Blue Jack, glancing at her one morning, when she reeled in her saddle. "It's wonderful that she isn't dead before this. I hoped she'd get sun-struck. I'd be glad if she'd die on the way; but if she don't do that, it won't take long to finish her after she gets to the villages."

The Titon river was forded, and now the horses broke into a wild gallop, which was kept up with more or less vigor, and with few intervals, all that day.

Late in the afternoon Blue Jack turned to his young captive, and said:

"When you entered upon the Great Sand Hill region, you passed beyond all possibility of help from the soldiers of Fort McPherson. The only thing that could now be done to help you would be to send messengers to Fort Pierre or Fort Sully, the forts nearest to us, and you may be sure they won't take that trouble in these times of excitement and war. No; you have passed beyond all power to rescue. When you enter the Indian village this very day you bid adieu to Mark Heber, to a life of ease, to pleasures, and enter upon the new life which I, as your father, have marked out for you! Look yonder! The sunset is shining on your future home!"

Gay's eyes followed the direction in which his finger pointed. And there to the northward she beheld the huts of a squalid Indian village. She felt that she was at the threshold of a living tomb!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE TWO CLIENTS.

FROM AN OLD ATTORNEY'S NOTE-BOOK.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

With what I considered a competence, accumulated by long years of devotion to my profession, I removed to the far Western country with my brother. He had secured a large tract of valuable land upon the frontier, and as he proposed to build up a town he offered me a goodly share of the proceeds for my professional services. My wife and only child had died years before, so that, with the removal of my brother, no ties of consanguinity bound me to the Eastern home. For a season things promised well in our new field; but at length ill-fortune came upon us. My brother was persuaded into an ill-starred speculation, and lost all his property, and the blow killed him. And it came near killing me, too,—not the loss of property, but the loss of my brother. I had reached my sixtieth year, and the reverse came hard upon me. I had invested all my money in the new township; but the wreck was not total. Friends told me if I would remain, and give them the benefit of my legal knowledge, they would secure to me a portion of the land. I did so, and they kept their promise. The town grew and flourished, just as my brother had anticipated, and in time I was upon my feet, my real estate becoming more and more valuable, and my practice growing in extent and importance.

It was on a cold, blustering evening in November that I sat in my office engaged in making a transcript of land titles for the Government agent. I had finished my work, and was lighting my pipe for a comfortable smoke, when I was disturbed by a rap upon my door. Without arising I bade the applicant "come in," and there entered a young man, worn and travel-stained, his garb poor, and his face unshaven.

"Is this Mr. Lascomb?" he asked, twirling his napless hat in his hand, and showing by his manner that he was not born and bred to the position he now occupied.

I told him my name was Lascomb.

"Are you Mr. John Lascomb, formerly of New Haven, in Connecticut?"

I nodded in the affirmative.

"Mr. Lascomb," said he, "you used to be a friend to those who were friends of mine. May I sit down and tell you my story?"

I kindly answered him "Yes," and bade him take a seat by the fire. His story was so direct and concise that I will give it in his own words:

"You may not remember me," he commenced; "but you knew my mother—she that was Mary Harding,—and you knew her after she married with my father, Nathan Adams. You also knew my uncle Amos Harding, my mother's brother."

I nodded as the old times came back to me. I remembered well. Those of whom he had spoken had been school-mates with me in the years long gone.

"You may remember," continued my visitor, "that my uncle Amos had also a brother, older than himself, named Thomas. And you may remember that Thomas was a thriftless, dissipated man, whom Amos tried hard to save and reform, but without avail. Thomas had three sons, two of whom were as unprincipled as their father had been before them. My mother was particularly beloved by Amos, and when my father died he took her to his home; and when I had reached a suitable age he placed me in the store of a friend, intending, as he informed my mother, to make a merchant of me. In time my mother died, and my uncle Thomas also died, as did his youngest son. The other two sons of Thomas, both older than myself, were provided for by our uncle Amos, who obtained for them situations in which they might have done well had they been so inclined; but they were not steady, and our good uncle's kindness failed them.

"As I approached the age of one-and-twenty Uncle Amos retired from business with an ample fortune, and the prospects were that I was to become his heir. He had intimated that he would do no more for the sons of his brother. Shortly after this Ezra and Jason, the sons of Thomas of whom I have spoken, made great show of reformation. They signed the total abstinence pledge, and joined the church, and also took part in the Sabbath school. They sought my society, and were once more admitted to our uncle's house. I had no faith in them, and they saw it; but they sorely misjudged me if they thought I would communicate my misgivings to our good old uncle.

"Six months had passed thus when, one evening, my cousins asked me to join them in a moonlight excursion down the bay. They had engaged a good boat, which they knew well how to manage, and as the moon was at its full, and the weather fine, the sail promised to be a pleasant one. I joined them readily—not so much for the pastime as from a desire to disabuse their minds of any thought that I dreaded their association. And yet I did, even then, fear them. I believed them to be bad men and hypocrites, and I was firm in the conviction that their apparent reform was only a mask assumed for the purpose of blinding their wealthy uncle.

"We left the end of Long Wharf at eight o'clock, and sailed out into the Sound. When far away from land my cousins produced apples and home-brewed beer. I eat of the fruit, and drank of the beer, and shortly afterward I felt sick and dizzy. My cousins laughed at me, and told me I was seasick; but I knew better. I was used to the water, and this was not seasickness. Very soon I sank down with a dreadful faintness, and I remember of hearing my cousins cry out that the boat had sprung aleak, and was sinking; but I was too weak to lift myself. I remember that I felt the flood of cold water surging about me, and then my senses left me.

"Returning sense found me on board a ship bound for China. I had been picked up while floating upon a tangled mass of spars, cordage and sails; and from the description which was given of my ark I judged that when the boat went over I must have got caught in the floating canvas and cordage with the mast and bowsprit attached. When I talked of being put on shore I was told that it was impossible. The ship was well out at sea, with a fair wind, and could not go back. I was sick a week; and when I had explained all the circumstances to the surgeon he decided that I had been poisoned! This did not startle me, for I had already entertained the suspicion. I had remembered that my cousins had not drank from the same bottle from which my drink had been poured; and I remembered, furthermore, of having seen Ezra in the act of pulling something like a plug from the boat's bottom. And another thing was fixed in my mind as among the last impressions upon my failing sense: My cousins were both provided with life-preservers! I need not tell you how my suspicions pointed after that. If my cousins reached the shore in safety—which their life-preservers would enable them to do on such a calm and moonlight night,—they could easily account for my disappearance.

"The ship was the *Mercator*, of New York, John Stimson, Master. We were disabled in a typhoon, and wrecked on one of the Nicobars. We gained passage in a Dutch vessel to Canton, and thence, after a few months, I made my way across the Pacific to San Francisco. In the latter city I met a man from New Haven, and without discovering myself I learned from him that Ezra and Jason Harding were alive and well, and were regarded as the heirs of their rich uncle. From San Francisco, sir, I have made my way overland to this place. I have suffered enough to be bold and frank now. I am in need of both money and advice. I heard of you, and I thought, if you were really the John Lascomb of my mother's school-day memory, you would at least hear me, and help me if in your power."

I had listened to the young man's story, and I believed it; but I wanted time for thought. I had been thinking for a long time that I would like to revisit the old home, and I might now combine profit with pleasure. I could go on with young Adams—William, he told me his name was,—and see him restored to his uncle, and also help to bring to punishment the villainous cousins. But, as I remarked before, I wanted time for thought. I took the youth home with me, and made him comfortable.

It was past ten o'clock when we reached the public-house where I boarded, and when I had seen my charge safely in the care of the kind-hearted landlord I betook myself to the bar-room, where, with a mug of hot toddy and a fresh pipe, I sat down to enjoy the repose which had been broken in upon at the office.

But I was not to be left to myself. Scarcely was my pipe lighted when the porter informed me that a stranger wished to see me. He had been waiting for me since the arrival of the stage from Jackson.

"Who and what is he?" I asked.

"Here he is, sir."

I looked up, and saw an elderly gentleman—a man of about my own age,—rotund and heavy, though looking careworn and broken in spirit. Surely the face was familiar.

"Lascomb,—don't you know me?" he said, extending his hand.

"AMOS HARDING!" I exclaimed, grasping the outstretched member warmly.

It was indeed my old school-mate of the other years—the self-same man of whom we had been talking that very evening! We sat down, and when another mug had been brought, we were left alone. I would have talked of the old times, but my friend's mind was burdened with other matters, and at length I allowed him to proceed to business.

"I came West a month ago," he said, "and while stopping in Jackson I heard of you. I was sure that it was my old friend, and I determined to seek you."

And then he told me his story; but there is no need that I should repeat it in detail. Most of it I had heard from the lips of William Adams only a few hours before. He told me very nearly as the young man had told me up to the time of the disappearance of his sister's son. He told how Ezra and Jason Harding had been picked up from the water by a passing boat, and how he had given up William as lost. For a time he had thought nothing wrong. For almost two years the living nephews had seemed really attached to him, and to be leading upright lives. But finally he had discovered their duplicity and their hidden wickedness; and from various circumstances which came to his knowledge he was led to believe that they had dealt unfairly by their unfortunate cousin.

"But this was not all," he went on. "It at length broke upon me that they meditated my own destruction. They knew I had made a will in which they were named the heirs in case the child of my sister should be proved dead. I watched them when they did not know it, and so strong became my conviction that I lost all joy and comfort of living. It was worse than being forsaken. My own blood had turned against me even unto death! As a respite from danger, and to gain time and opportunity for thought, I determined to leave home. I came away secretly, letting only my bankers know that I was going; and even to them I could not give my destination.

"I have travelled far, and here I am. I have had time for thought, but I have not made much headway toward a solution of the difficulty. You are a lawyer, and you are my friend,—can you not help me?"

I took the old man's hand, and I said to him,—

"Let us both sleep upon this. I think I see a way through all the trouble. I will point it out in the morning. And now let us talk of the old times."

His face brightened, and I gradually led him away from the incubus which had so long oppressed him, and until midnight we talked over our pipes of the happier times.

On the following morning I found Mr. Harding in the bar-room when I came down. His first question was of my promise of the night before. Had I thought of the solution? Could I point it out to him?

I sent him into the little parlor, and bade him wait there until I returned. Then I went and found William Adams, and led him to the same apartment. And my two clients were face to face.

The old man was for the moment like one frightened. As he afterward assured me, he believed that he saw a ghost. But not so the young man. He knew that he saw his good, kind uncle, and he hastened toward him with outstretched hands.

"Uncle Amos!—Thank God!"

And then the old man knew him. Ghosts could not have such hearty voice, nor such strong, hard hands.

And I left them weeping in one another's arms.

Within a week from that time I returned with them to the old Eastern home. Mr. Harding could not find heart to bring the children of his dead brother to public trial; but he made them confess their guilt, and then he sent them away, at the same time giving them to understand that it would be for their interest never to return.

Amos Harding still lives, a hale old man of almost fourscore, and he is enjoying the rich satisfaction of seeing his sister's child prosper upon his bounty while he himself hath capacity to share in the blessing.

JESSIE, THE SCOTCH GIRL.

A ROMANCE OF SPRING CLEANING.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

All the orchards flushed with rose-pink banners of bloom, all the meadows purpled with violets; daffodils tossing their golden crests along the garden paths, and the robins singing as though life were one grand musical jubilee; and yet the soul of Mrs. Levinbolt, in the great cream-colored farm-house on the top of the hill, was sore disquieted within her.

"It always happens so, at spring cleaning!" said she despairingly. "Either a lot of company comes, just as you've got the carpets up and the bedsteads down, or else your help clears off and leaves you. It's a-most enough to put one out of conceit with ever trying to have things clean and decent. And there was I fool enough to raise Mary Ann's wages half a dollar a week, at Christmas."

"Don't fret, mother," said Sam. "*I'll* help you. I'm a master-hand at whitewashing; and I guess I could scrub, if you'd give me a brush and lots of soap and sand."

Mrs. Levinbolt laughed, in spite of her vexation, at the idea of Sam., the fine gentleman of the family, who had had a college education and was studying for the ministry, scrubbing floors! But Sam. himself looked perfectly serious, as he stood there, a tall, straight, pleasant-eyed young man, such as the eyes of motherhood might well delight to look upon.

"You!" cried Mrs. Levinbolt, a laugh and a groan mingling hysterically together in her tones.

"Why not I as well as you, mother? I'm strong."

"Yes, but— Hush! Who is that coming?"

A blue-eyed, fair-haired girl was advancing up the garden path, between the serried ranks of yellow-turbaned daffodils, with a bundle balanced on one arm, and the springy elastic footfall peculiar to those who have been accustomed to plenty of outdoor exercise. She wore a bright colored plaid shawl, twisted, scarf fashion, about her shoulders, and smiled frankly up into the suspicious face of the farmer's wife.

"Might I have a drink of water, please? and leave to sit here on the porch while I eat a bit of bread? I'll be no charge to you; I have it here in my bundle," she said.

"Certainly," said Sam., at once. "I'll draw some fresh for you out of the well."

"Who are you?" questioned his mother, rather more warily, "and where do you come from?"

"My name is Jessie Maclane," she answered simply, "and I'm a stranger in this country. I came from Aberdeenshire, in Scotland."

"You'd better have stayed there, I'm thinking," said Mrs. Levinbolt dryly.

"And that's what I've thought more than once myself," said the young girl, with a pleasant laugh. "But here I am, you see. I came out to live with a lady, and when I got to the place in Connecticut, she'd gone West, and I was all alone in a strange land."

"What are you going to do?" the farmer's wife asked, interested in spite of herself.

"I am looking for work," said Jessie simply. "I was brought up on a farm, and I'm handy and willing. Do you know of any place they're wanting a lass?"

"The very thing!" said Sam., who had just come in with a brimming pail of cool, sparkling water, and had caught the latter half of the sentence. "Mother, why don't you hire her?"

Mrs. Levinbolt looked vexed.

"You're always so impulsive, Sam. Not but what I *did* need help, just at this house cleaning, with all the spring hands on the farm, but—"

Jessie Maclane's pretty oval face brightened like a daisy in the sunshine.

"O ma'am, if you would but hire me! I'll do my best, and be true and faithful; and I'm certain I'd be happy here, for it's a bonnie place as ever I saw, with the blooming orchards and the green fields."

Mrs. Levinbolt visibly thawed. She was justly proud of the farm, and she liked to have it admired.

"It's a new thing to me, taking a girl with neither recommend nor friends," said she.

"But I've got a paper from our minister at home," said Jessie eagerly, drawing a folded envelope from her bosom. "And it's only a trial I ask. I was always with the kye at home, and I can make rare good butter."

And the upshot of the matter was, that Mrs. Levinbolt took the Scotch lassie—on trial, as it were.

Jessie proved to be the best and quickest, and most sunny-tempered of serving damsels; clean enough in her dairy to suit even Mrs. Levinbolt, and full of bright good-humor. Sam. had no need to whitewash, for Jessie did it, with her brown braids tied up in a checked handkerchief; and in the question of scrubbing, it was astonishing to see how much those slim brown hands could accomplish.

The year crept round, crowned with roses, garlanded with autumn leaves, and fringed with the dazzling ermine of many a snow fall, and once more the spring returned, and Mrs. Levinbolt, true to the calendar, tore up her carpets, and deluged every room in cleansing suds and steam. And Jessie Maclane was with her still.

"I'm sure I don't know what we should do without Jessie," she said. "She's my right-hand woman; and now that I'm getting a little stiff and rheumaticky, it's good to have some one around that you can depend upon. I wish I could be sure of keeping her always; she's 'most like a daughter to me. Why can't Sam.—"

And there Mrs. Levinbolt's reflection invariably stopped.

The house cleaning was in mid career; the carpets were on the line, and Jessie, in a madder-red calico gown, short enough to show a pair of trim round ankles, was on a ladder, doing a little amateur paper-hanging, while Mrs. Levinbolt polished the inside of the keeping-room windows, when the carriage from the depot rolled up to the door.

"Company!" gasped Mrs. Levinbolt. "It *always* happens so—and I without a sign of a cap on!"

Quick as thought Jessie descended from her aerial elevation, and scudded to the bedroom for Mrs. Levinbolt's cap, and a ruffled apron which her own deft fingers had made to fit the good woman's portly figure.

"It's a young lady, in a brown silk travelling suit, and such a *dear* little white straw hat!" whispered breathless Jessie.

Mrs. Levinbolt groaned.

"It's my cousin Miles Henshaw's daughter Sybilla, come to make a visit," she sighed; adding in spirit, "Why *don't* folks wait until they are invited?"

But, too hospitable openly to express her thoughts, she advanced, with the cap somewhat on one side, to greet the new-comer.

Miss Sybilla Henshaw was a city young lady, neither quite so young nor so pretty as she had once been, but amazingly well preserved. She had come out into the country ostensibly to visit Cousin Jerusha, but in reality to marry Sam. A country minister's wife was not much, but it was considerably better than to live and die a maiden lady.

Jessie's heart sank within her at the sight of Miss Henshaw's silks and laces, and chains and bracelets.

"He'll care no more for *me*," she thought, and kept as much out of the way as possible.

But Sybilla's eyes were keen enough to discern a possible rival in the blooming little Scotch girl, and she resolved to get her out of the way.

When Sam. Levinbolt came in to supper, the third day after Miss Henshaw's arrival, he found Jessie crying, his mother amazed and doubtful, and Sybilla wrathful.

"Of course she has taken it!" cried Sybilla. "Who else would touch my porte-monnaie? And it was on my dressing bureau this morning when she went in to make the beds, and now it is gone. I tell you, Cousin Jerusha, she is a thief, and the sooner you get her out of the house the better."

"Stop, Sybilla," said Sam. courteously, but very firmly. "No one calls Jessie Maclane a thief in my hearing. Mother, *you* should know better than that."

"But," stammered Mrs. Levinbolt, "if Sybilla's pocket-book is really gone—"

"*If*, Cousin Jerusha!"

Sybilla drew out her pocket handkerchief to wipe away an imaginary tear of injured innocence, and with it tumbled out something on the floor. Sam. stooped and picked it up, handing it with a bow to his cousin.

"Your pocket-book, Sybilla!"

Miss Henshaw turned scarlet, and bit her lip.

"How very careless of me!" she said, in a choked voice. "I must have put it there myself, and forgotten all about it."

"I would advise you to cultivate your memory for the future," said Sam. Levinbolt, in a hard, dry voice. "Jessie, girl, don't cry any more, but give me some tea, for I'm tired."

That evening, in the purple dusk, after Miss Henshaw had gone up stairs to pack her trunk—for the spring campaign had evidently proved a failure—Jessie Maclane came to where Mrs. Levinbolt was sitting, planning whether she should begin the garret next day, or whitewash the best parlor.

"Mrs. Levinbolt," said the girl simply, "I have come to tell you that—"

"Not that you're *going*, and in the very midst of house cleaning!" shrieked Mrs. Levinbolt, with upraised and deprecating hands. "Oh, Jessie, that isn't like you!"

"No," said Jessie, coloring like a rose. "If you like, I will stay at the farm always, for Mr. Sam. has asked me to marry him. Oh, Mrs. Levinbolt, I am so happy!"

And Jessie Maclane cried and laughed in the same breath.

So Jessie wears a betrothal ring of plain gold, and Miss Henshaw went home with a horrible cold in the head, contracted from damp wall paper and newly scrubbed floors; and that was the upshot of the spring cleaning!

ACROSS THE TRACK.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

"It is no use, mother, not a bit of use to try. You might as well attempt to catch and chain the wind in its wildest course, as to stay Abner Markley in his. Better let him alone."

"Don't talk so, husband. I must, indeed I must. His mother would have tried to save my boy, in the same situation, I know. It may be as you say, but I'll try all the same; and if I fail—no, no, I must not fail; I can't bear to use that word. Well, I'll do my duty, and trust to God for the result," answered Ruth Mild, as she wiped away the tears that stole gently down her sweet motherly face.

"You don't think of the danger to our own boy. If you bring him here, Ruth, God only knows where it might end. You forget." And Abel Mild glanced with an anxious eye through the open door into the next room, where sat a little maiden, the miniature picture of her mother—fairer and fresher in coloring though.

"Oh, Abel! that child, little more than a baby!"

"In her sixteenth year, and he handsome enough to make a girl forget mother, father and the whole world, for him. Don't do it, mother. It is a hereditary sin, from father to son. Would you see your child the wife of a drunkard?"

A shiver, a little cry of terror, and for a moment the sweet face paled. She hesitated, and Abel Mild thought he had triumphed.

"No. God will spare me that, I trust—I *know*. And so I will trust Him—aye, 'even though He slay me.'"

"And offer your own lamb to the sacrifice!" Abel said, in a tone that told the dark forebodings that possessed his spirit.

Again she faltered, and leant, with her head buried in her hands, as if praying. Again her eyes were looking into Abel's, clear, and showing no doubts in her heart.

"He knoweth my heart—its weakness and its strength. He will not try me beyond my power to bear. If you love me, Abel, say no more. Never before, in the twenty years of our married life, have I murmured against your will. Now I feel that I am doing His," she said, raising her eyes upward.

There was an expression on her face more beautiful than Abel had ever seen, even in those days when he thought there was not as lovely a face in the world—an expression so holy, so trusting, that Abel went up to her, drew her head on his bosom, and kissing her, said:

"May He you trust bless and reward you, Ruth, my dear, good little wife. Forget what I've said, and go your way, which has ever been the right one."

"Thank you, Abel. You have made me happier. And now I will go. He leaves his office at three o'clock, dines at four; if I start now, I will be there just the right time. He will have finished, and be in his room."

Abner Markley, as Abel Mild had said, was handsome enough to win the heart of any woman. He was sitting in his room, as Ruth hoped to find him. And when he jumped up to welcome her, she thought of her husband's words.

"What an unexpected pleasure, Mrs. Mild!" he said, placing her in the comfortable chair from which he had just arisen.

"Yes? I'm glad to find you disengaged. I have another pleasure awaiting you. See! Looking over my treasures I found this, and have brought it for you—to give you, if you wish."

She held toward him a little velvet case, which he hastened to take and open.

Ruth Mild anxiously watched his face while he gazed on the miniature he held.

"My mother! Is it? Yes, I know it! Oh, thank you, dear Mrs. Mild. How very, very beautiful! But I cannot remember her thus. Here her eyes are so laughing, her lips ready to break into smiles. I'm glad to have this to look at; for always, when thinking of her, I can only call up a face, beautiful enough, but oh! sad! so very sad!—her eyes looking as though they had shed oceans of tears. And she once looked like this?"

"Yes, my boy. She sat for that in her wedding dress, a week before she became your father's wife. I was her bride's-maid. She was the merriest girl in the village when your father won her from us, and carried her off to the city to live."

"Mrs. Mild"—he turned his eyes from the beautiful picture to hers, and asked—"what changed my mother so terribly? Was my father not kind?"

She hesitated.

"Tell me—all. I remember nothing of father. I have been told I was only five years old when he died. Was it his death—"

"No, no; but—"

"Speak freely, Mrs. Mild."

"May I? Well, it was the manner of your father's death which broke her heart; but it had been terribly wounded before, Abner. She was a drunkard's wife."

The good woman's voice had sunk so low, he had to lean forward to catch the words; and then started back with a wounded cry, which caused her to say:

"I've hurt you. Forgive me."

"Yes, yes. But go on. Tell me all. Say it as you choose," he said, sinking back into his chair, and covering his face with one hand, the other still holding his mother's picture.

She talked on, picturing to him in graphic colors the young bride leaving them, so happy, so trusting; of the first surprise and mortification; the dreadful fears when she was no longer surprised; then the suffering all alone—she could confide that sorrow to none; of hope entering her heart again when she watched for the "little one's coming."

The reformation which brought for a brief time such holy happiness, as over the little one's—the baby boy's—cradle she stood with him, she trusted in again—again to be disappointed. On and on to the violent death she told him, and then Ruth Mild pleaded as only a mother can plead. And when she finished by saying:

"Yes, my boy, the last time we met, she held you in her arms, and pressing her pale lips to yours, she said:

"'Oh, Ruth, if I could take my darling with me, I would gladly, gladly close my eyes to earth! But if I leave him, shall I ever find him again? Will he come?—O God, will my boy come to me up there?'"

Ruth Mild's voice was trembling, scarcely audible, as she repeated the dying mother's words.

Abner's bosom was convulsed with emotion. He did not try to conceal it, as he sobbed forth:

"Yes, yes, mother, with God's help I will come to you."

Ruth Mild had conquered. Abner Markley became one of her household. In every way she endeavored to hold him firm. Little Alice, with her dove-like eyes, was a source of deep and pure pleasure to the young man. She was so different from every other girl he knew—so gentle, so artless and childlike. Hours that used to be spent in drinking and club-rooms were passed reading to her, telling of the wonders of the old world, over which he had travelled, or in singing with her.

Those were happy evenings to all. Father Mild forgot his fears, as he watched the young folks and listened to the beautiful music they made—Alice at the piano, Abner with his flute, and the old man's second self, young Abel, with his violin. A year passed thus, bringing Abner, as he felt, nearer to mother. The tongues of many with their dark predictions had ceased, and those who had trusted pronounced Abner Markley saved.

"I wish I could excuse myself from this party to-night," Abner said. And little Allie asked:

"Must you go?"

"I think so. I did not intend to. I'd made up my mind to send an excuse, but the Judge came into my room this afternoon and insisted. You know he is our chief, and it is a respect due him to accept his invitation; but I will not stay long. There are some pretty wild fellows going—determined to have a 'time,' as they say; but I'll slip from them, and hasten back home to you, my little dove-eyed darling Allie here. Sit up for me; I have something to tell you, and something to beg for," he whispered. And then, as she stood in the door, he said:

"There, run in out of the cold. I must be more careful of you. Stop a moment. Kiss me, Allie?"

She drew back. He knew that her cheeks were crimsoned, although it was too dark to see.

"Mother will not care; kiss me, darling. I will tell her all to-morrow. Thank you. Now run in," he said.

And she darted off to shed a few happy tears, and watch and wait for his coming.

"God bless her! I wonder if mother is watching over us to-night? I wish she were alive, to know my darling," Abner said, as the door closed on Allie's retreating form.

It was a brilliant throng that gathered in the saloon of Judge Armstead. Abner Markley was a universal favorite, and all welcomed him warmly.

That party was decidedly the party of the season. The music grand, the supper a perfect success. How the wine sparkled! And some of the women's eyes brightened, I'm sorry to tell, as they sipped the tempting glass.

Abner Markley forgot for the time the dove-like eyes of Allie, as he looked into the bright, flashing black ones of a girl whose influence he had known before. And when she held to him a glass of champagne, saying:

"How can you resist? take it," he replied:

"I could resist the wine, but not *you*." And taking it from her, drained the glass—another and another.

The hours passed on. Allie watched and waited.

Not until he had placed his tempter in her carriage did Abner start for home, and then he had his senses sufficient to know he could not return to Allie as he was.

In the gray light of morning, when little Alice, weary with watching, had fallen asleep with her pale face against the window, there came a slow, heavy tread along the pavement. The door bell aroused her from a frightful dream. She started, confused and terrified, to listen.

Strange voices reached her ear, talking in awed tones. She sped on to the passage to catch the words:

"Found dead on the track."

Down the steps, with a wild cry, and beside the bier she fell; her arms clasped about the dead—her dead—she cried:

"No, no, not dead! Abner, speak to Allie, your Allie. See; I've waited for you as you bade me. Abner! Abner!—Father, has he fainted?" turning her face, with an appealing look, toward her father, who, shaking his head sorrowfully, tried to take her away.

"Dead!" she cried, in a tone that brought the tears to the rough men's eyes, and they turned off as Abel Mild lifted his child away and placed her in her mother's arms.

"I *do* wish we had not had wines last night," said Mrs. Armstead the next morning, while sipping her coffee.

"Why not?" asked her husband.

"Why, did you not notice young Markley used considerable, and felt the effects too? You know he had given it up for a year. You remember I suggested we should dispense with it."

"Nonsense! Give up a social custom for the sake of *one* fellow who is too weak to resist! I shall never do it."

"Mother!" exclaimed Fred. Armstead, rushing in—"Mother, Abner Markley is dead!—found dead across the railroad track. Concussion of the brain, they say."

Concussion of the brain, they say! Can that decision of the physicians bring relief to the conscience of those who placed the wine before him, or of hers who held it to his lips? It could not to mine. There would be a constant, endless whisper of "murdered" in my ear, sinking to the very depth of my heart. I would sooner be the stricken little Allie, or Abner, cold and dead, than be either of the hospitable hosts who, for the sake of one soul, could not give up a social custom, or the vain girl whose thoughtlessness or indifference, to say the least, won him to death.

ANTICIPATION.

BY MARY E. LAMBERT.

We see, as we sail down the river of Time,
A beautiful island in view,
Where the grass is like velvet, and flowers so rare,
And the skies of most marvellous hue.

Inhabited? Yes; there are palaces grand,
And cottages too, we see there.
Brown stone? No; the practical builders all say
They are frail castles, builded of air.

But, oh, they are beautiful, seen from afar,
And peopled with fancies as bright
As the lustrous visions of opium dreams,
Or the wondrous daughters of Light.

From its odorous shores come the rarest perfumes,
All wafted by Hope's golden wing;
We see the green bowers, and list to the song
That the gay-plumaged-birds ever sing.

But, oh, that fair isle in the river of Time
Is, to us, as a bright shining star;
On and onward we sail, and it still greets our sight
In the distance, forever afar.

◆

A DARING GAME;

OR,

Neva's Three Lovers.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NEVA STILL DEFIANT.

The sounds of active and hostile pursuit, growing every instant louder as the pursuers neared Neva's temporary halting-place, startled the young fugitive into renewed flight. She started up like a wearied bird from its nest, and fled onward through tangled shrubbery and over outcropping boulders, tripping now and then over some loose rock, which, at the touch of her light feet, went rumbling down the steep mountain side with a crash that rang in her ears, frightening her to yet greater speed. She sped through thickets of the dwarfed mountain pines and firs, and over open and sterile patches of ground, where there were no trees nor friendly rocks to screen her flying figure, and the drizzling Scotch mist fell around her like a dusky vail, and the skies were gloomy above her, and the air was keen with wintry chill.

And still was borne to her ears, sometimes louder, sometimes fainter, the sounds of the barking of dogs and the shouts of men. These sounds quickened Neva's flagging steps, but she could not outrun her pursuers. They were on her track, and sooner or later, unless she could outwit them, or hide from them, they must recapture her.

Her wild eyes searched the mountain side as she hurried on. There was no hole in the rocks into which she might creep, and lie concealed until her enemies should have passed. The trees were too low and scraggy to offer her shelter among their few and scantily foliaged branches. Her way was difficult and tortuous, and with a sudden change of purpose, Neva turned aside from her course of skirting the mountain, and plunged downward toward the mountain's base.

"I shall come down upon the side nearly opposite the loch," she thought. "At any rate, I have passed beyond the plateau."

In the course of ten minutes more, she struck into a rude wagon track, which Neva conjectured led from the Wilderness to some farm-house or hamlet upon the opposite side of the mountain. She followed the circuitous, steep, and slowly descending track, looking, as she ran, like some wild spirit of the mist.

The sounds of pursuit faded out of hearing, and again she sat down to rest, her limbs giving way beneath her. Her tongue was parched and swollen, and the blood surged through her frame still with that one gigantic throbbing, and her feet ached with an utter weariness, yet she got up presently and staggered on, with fearing backward glances over her shoulders, and her eyes staring wildly from out the wet whiteness of her young face.

"I can't keep on much longer," she murmured aloud. "I feel very strange and ill. Perhaps I shall die here, and alone. Oh, is there no help for me?"

No answer came to that piteous cry save the wailing of the winds among the pine boughs, and the dashing of the sleet-like rain in her face. She moved more and more slowly. Her garments seemed strangely heavy to her, and her feet grew more and more like leaden clogs weighting her down to the earth.

A terrible despair seized upon her. With a wild prayer on her lips and a faintness like that of death upon her, she leaned against a low tree, clinging to it to prevent herself from falling. As her head sunk forward wearily upon her breast, her closing eyes caught a glimpse through the trees of an object at a little distance that lent to her for the moment an unreal strength and vigor, and she gave a great cry of joy, as hope surged back into her young fainting heart.

The object was only a small cabin built of cobble-stones, a mere shepherd's hut perhaps, or, as was far more likely, it had been built long ago for the occasional use of belated sportsmen who, during a stay at the Wilderness, found themselves lost upon the mountain. It had a strong roof and a capacious chimney, but it exhibited no sign of habitation. Neva did not observe this fact, and pressed onward to the door of the cabin, which she opened without preliminary knocking. There was no one in the cabin.

Neva's heart sank as she made this discovery. There was no one here to whom she could appeal for protection. She hesitated whether to go on or to remain here, but her physical exhaustion decided the question. It was absolutely necessary that she should rest, and she entered the humble dwelling and closed the door.

The cabin contained but a single room with two closets attached, and but a single window. This was provided with an inside shutter. There was also a stout wooden bar and iron rests for its support, as a means of securing the door. Neva barred the door and shuttered the window, and then sank down in a confused heap upon the floor, listening with sharpened hearing for some sound of pursuit.

But she heard none. Evidently her divergence from her first course had thrown her enemies off her track. A wild joy and gratitude filled her soul. But when its first flush was over, a chill like that of death again seized upon her. Her teeth chattered, and strange rheumatic pains shot through her frame. She shook too, as with an ague.

The room was bare of furniture, but the great blackened hearth, with a few half burnt sticks upon it, testified that some person had lately spent the night in the cabin. The door of one of the closets was open, and Neva could see that there were fagots of wood stored within. She arose feebly, and brought out an armful of wood, piling it on the hearth. She stirred the ashes, in the hope of finding a living coal; and finding none, went back to the closet. Here, to her great joy, she found a tin box half filled with matches hanging against the wall.

In three minutes more she had a glorious fire on the hearth, crackling and blazing and flaming cheerily, and the girl's heart leaped up at the sight of those dancing flames. She sank down upon the hearth, her hands held out to the genial blaze, her pale wild face looking strangely weird and lovely in the red glow, and the steam arising from her wet garments like a thick mist.

A delicious sense of rest pervaded her frame, and the rheumatic pains disappeared before the penetrating heat of the great fire. But a terrible sense of weakness remained. Her prison fare of bread and water, and her lack of exercise, during her dreary days of confinement at the Wilderness, had told seriously upon her strength. She began to fear that she could go no further, and a great hunger began to assail her, seeming like a vulture tearing at her vitals.

Impelled by a vague hope that there might be food in the dwelling, she went to the second small closet. It was filled with empty shelves. In one corner an old torn basket had been carelessly thrown. Neva examined the basket, and discovered in it a small black bottle, with a few drops of Highland whiskey in it, but there was no food. She drank the whiskey and crouched down again upon the hearth, weary and worn, and a little later a merciful stupor enwrapped her senses—the stupor of a death-like sleep, such as utter exhaustion sometimes produces.

It seemed to her that she had slept but a minute, but really she had slept for hours, when she was awakened by a loud beating upon the cabin door. She started up broad awake, and stood in an attitude of flight, her head bent toward the door.

"I say she's in here!" she heard a voice crying loudly—a voice which she recognized with a thrill of terror as the voice of Craven Black. "We 've scoured the mountain on this side, and have not found her. She must have taken refuge in this unused cabin. Miss Wynde! Miss Neva!"

Neva was still as death. She scarcely dared to breathe.

Again Craven Black beat furiously upon the door.

"Break in the door!" he shouted. "Here, one of you sailors, bring that log of wood yonder, and we'll see who has barred this door on the inside. The log of wood! Quick!"

Neva stared around her with wild, frightened eyes. There was no outlet from the cabin save through the door or window, and these were side by side, and both commanded by her enemies.

With a terrible despair she crouched again on the hearth, her head still bent toward the door.

"We'll make a battering-ram of the log," said Craven Black. "So! Now the four of us will break the door in in a second. Guard the door, men, while I go in. Keep out those sheep dogs. They act like wolves. Now!"

There was a combined assault upon the door. It trembled and creaked, and one of the iron rests in the wall, unable to resist the pressure brought to bear upon it, gave way, bursting from its socket. The wooden bar dropped to the floor, and the door was burst open so violently and so suddenly that Craven Black came flying into the room like some projectile hurled from a mortar.

He gave a yell of triumph at sight of the slender, crouching figure on the hearth.

"Here she is, boys," he cried. "We've found her! Poor creature! She is still in the delirium of the fever, as I told you. How wild she looks!"

The sailors stood without the door, half-careless, half-pitying. Craven Black had told them that his wife's step-daughter was ill, and had fled from the Wilderness in the delirium of fever, and they saw nothing in Neva's appearance to contradict the statement. For the young girl sprang to her feet and retreated from Craven Black, with both hands upraised, the palms turned outward, and her wild face full of horror and loathing. Her eyes were unnaturally bright, and her cheeks and lips were tinted with vivid carmine. Even Craven Black was alarmed at her appearance, and was calmed into instant gentleness.

"My poor Neva!" he cried. "I am come to take you home—"

"I will not go!" cried the girl, her red-brown eyes flashing. "O God, am I utterly forsaken and abandoned to my enemies?"

"You hear her?" exclaimed Black. "Poor thing! she needs her step-mother's tender care and nursing. We brought her up to the Wilderness, hoping that the change would cure her propensity to these paroxysms. Come, Neva. Your step-mother is very anxious about you, and the whole household is alarmed."

"Let me die here," said Neva, her sweet young voice rising to a wail. "Oh, men, have you no pity for me? Can you not see that Craven Black is my enemy? Will you not protect me, and set me free? In the name of Mercy—"

"Hear her!" said the sailor who had acted as captain of the yacht, speaking in an audible whisper. "As mad as a March hare—and so young too!"

Clearly there was no help to be expected from the sailors.

Neva retreated to the further corner, as a helpless mouse retreats to a corner of the trap, and Craven Black followed her. There was a brief struggle, and Neva was again a captive.

"We must take turns in carrying her home," said Craven Black, pinioning Neva's arms to her sides. "It'll be a tough job up the steep mountain path, but we can do it."

"It's no great task," said one of the seamen. "She can't weigh much. She's fell away since she came to Scotland, and she can't be heavier nor a child of ten."

Craven Black caught up the girl's light figure, and bore her from the cabin, the men following. He strode up the steep hill, holding Neva fiercely to his breast, and now and then he looked down upon her still white face with an expression singularly made up of love and hatred.

Yes, although he had married Lady Wynde from motives of interest, and because, as he had said to himself, a half-loaf of bread was better than none at all, his old love for Neva was not dead in his guilty breast. It was a strange passion, growing hot and cool by turns, now verging toward hatred, and now reviving to its olden strength. As he gathered the girl in his arms, and went up the hill with her at long, fierce strides, he said to himself that there was no crime at which he would pause, no obstacle which he would not sweep from his path, if the heiress of Hawkhurst would only promise to marry him on the attainment of his freedom.

"Neva!" he whispered.

The young girl raised her eyes to his with such a look of loathing and detestation that his love for her changed suddenly again to hatred. He knew in that moment that the guilty scheme he had just conceived was only a vain fancy, and that Neva could never be induced under any circumstances to marry him.

"I'm tired, captain," he said abruptly. "You can carry her."

The captain took the helpless burden and went on, Black keeping at his side.

In this manner, taking turns in carrying the young captive, the party returned to the Wilderness.

The mist was still falling when they came upon the plateau, but Mrs. Black stood out upon the lawn, her head bare, her morning robe saturated with wet, and her face worn and haggard with anxiety. There were great dark circles under her hard black eyes, and her mouth was compressed, and there were deep lines about it that added ten years to her apparent age. What she had suffered that day from fear of exposure through her injured step-daughter, her face declared, but she had known less of remorse than of apprehension and terror.

Behind Octavia, upon the porch, and comfortably wrapped in a water-proof cloak, stood Mrs. Artress. Both had thus been watching nearly all the day for the return of the pursuers, and it was now three o'clock of the afternoon, and the dusk was rapidly falling.

"They've come! They've come!" cried Octavia Black hysterically. "They are alone—No; they have got the girl! We are safe—safe!"

She came running to meet her husband, who was now in advance of his men. Craven Black briefly informed his wife how and where he had found Neva, and at the porch he took the captive in his own arms, dismissing the three men to the yacht. He carried Neva to her own room, where Celeste was busy at the moment, and he unloosed the cord confining the girl's arms, setting her free.

There was a wood fire blazing on the hearth. Neva, paying no heed to her enemies, crouched down before it.

"Leave her to herself," said Craven Black. "Celeste, you may remain to dress your young lady—"

"I will dress myself," interposed Neva, in a low, weary voice. "I want to be alone."

"Celeste had better dress Octavia," exclaimed Mrs. Artress abruptly. "Octavia has acted like some cowardly, frightened child all day, Craven. She has stood on the lawn bare headed, in the mist, until she is wet to the skin, and has a fearful cold. She is nearly ill."

"I will have hot drinks prepared immediately," said Craven Black. "Octavia, you must take a hot bath. Celeste, bring a hot bath to Miss Wynde."

He led the way from the room, the others following. Celeste locked Neva's door, putting the key in her pocket. Octavia went to her own room, coughing dismally.

"Do you hear that?" demanded Mrs. Artress, stopping Craven Black in the hall. "Exercise has prevented any serious harm to Miss Wynde from to-day's exposure; but Octavia has taken a fearful cold. You'd better nurse her carefully. In your desire to get ten thousand a year more, don't throw away the four thousand you already have. Remember, if Octavia should die, you and I would be beggars!"

"What an infernal croaker you are!" said Black angrily. "It isn't necessary to twit me with my poverty. As to Octavia, if she's foolish enough to stand out in a chilling mist out of sheer cowardice, let her cure herself. I am cold and hungry, and I intend to take care of myself."

He proceeded to do so, ministering to his own wants with assiduity.

The French woman brought in a hot bath to Neva, and a bowl of steaming hot whisky punch, then hastening away to attend upon her mistress. Neva took her bath, changed her wet garments for dry ones, drank her punch, and went to bed. A free perspiration was induced, and the fever that had threatened her subsided, her pulse beat evenly, and her brain grew cool. She went to sleep, and did not awaken until late in the evening.

When she opened her eyes, Mrs. Artress was standing at her bedside, feeling her pulse.

"How do you feel?" demanded the woman, her ashen eyes surveying the girl insolently.

"I am quite well—only tired."

"Only tired!" echoed Mrs. Artress. "Only tired—after all the trouble you've made us to-day? Octavia is downright ill. You won't get another opportunity to repeat your proceeding of this morning, my fine young lady. Celeste is with me, and hereafter we two shall call upon you together. Octavia was foolish to come in here alone, but she did not know you so well this morning as she does now. We have brought you up a hot supper, by Craven's orders, but in the morning you go back to the bread and water diet, if you choose to remain obstinate."

Celeste was standing at the foot of the bed, and now wheeled forward a small table, on which were lighted candles and a large tray of food. This done, Mrs. Artress and the French woman went out together, locking the door behind them.

Neva sat up in bed, leaning against her pillows, and looked hungrily at the tray. There was a pot of steaming coffee, a plate of buttered hot scones, a dish filled with daintily broiled birds on toast, a dish of baked fish, and a basket filled with oranges, apples and grapes. Neva thought she had never beheld a meal so tempting in her life, and surely she had never been so famished. Craven Black had feared the result of her day's exposure on the bleak mountain to the chilling mist, upon her weakened frame, and had sent her strengthening food more from policy than pity. It was not to his interest that she should die.

Neva ate her dinner, or supper, as it might more properly be termed, and concealed the remnants of fowl in her trunk. It was well she did so, for the next morning Celeste brought to her only a meagre supply of bread and water. The remains of the wild fowls and of the whisky punch, however, were produced by the young girl when alone, and gave her the sustenance she needed.

Her limbs were somewhat stiff upon the day after her adventure on the mountain, but this stiffness wore off gradually, leaving her as well as ever.

Her diet continued meagre in the extreme, no change being afforded her from bread and water. Mrs. Artress and Celeste came to her once a day with food, Craven Black remaining in the ante-room during their visit, as a guard against another possible attempt at escape on the part of the young captive.

A week passed in this manner, before Octavia Black came again to Neva's room. But what a change in her that week had wrought! She had grown thin, and her features were worn to sharpness. A red flush burned fitfully on her cheeks, and her hard black eyes were strangely glittering. She had lost many of the graces that had distinguished her, and looked what she was—a bold, unscrupulous, unprincipled woman. Neva could not particularize in what her charm of person and manner had lain, but those charms were now gone. She looked ten years older than her age, and coughed like a consumptive.

"What have you to say to-day, Neva?" asked Octavia, in a hoarse voice.

"Nothing," said Neva calmly.

"You have put us to a terrible trouble; you have given me a horrible cold and cough; and yet you sit here as obstinate as if you were a princess and we were your subjects. Will nothing subdue your proud spirit? Will nothing bend your haughty will? Do you like bread and water and close confinement so well that you prefer them to a marriage with a handsome young man who adores you?"

"I prefer them to perjuring myself, madam," said Neva bravely. "I prefer a brief imprisonment to a lifetime of sorrow and repining."

"A brief imprisonment!" repeated Octavia. "It won't be so brief as you think. We are going to remain here all winter, if necessary to subdue you. We have entered on a path from which there is no turning back. The winters, I am told, are fearful in these wild Highlands. We shall soon be shut in with snows and awful winds. Your lover can never trace you here, and if he could he would not be able to reach the Wilderness in the dead of winter. We shall have a dismal winter—you especially. What do you say, Neva?" and her tone grew anxious. "Will you yield?"

"Never!" said Neva quietly. "I am no child to be frightened by cold, and I am not so fond of the pleasures of the table as to sell my soul for them. I will live here till I die of old-age before I will yield!"

Octavia Black's face darkened with an awful shadow. She dreaded the terrible Highland winter; and a strange terror, for which she could not account, held possession of her soul night and day. But, as she had said, she had entered on a path from which there was no turning back. Neva *must* yield, sooner or later, she said to herself, even if compelled to yield through physical weakness.

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Black, arising. "We will make preparations to spend the winter here. Craven will go to Inverness in the yacht one day this week, and purchase stores for our use during the cold season. We need blankets, and food of every description. If you should decide to go to Inverness with him, as the promised bride of Rufus Black, you have only to let me know before he sails."

She went out and locked the door, giving the key to Celeste, who waited in the outer room.

CHAPTER XL.

MORE TROUBLE IN THE HIGHLANDS.

Upon the afternoon of the same day on which occurred the interview between Octavia Black and young Neva Wynde, as detailed at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, Lally Bird, attended by Mrs. Peters, arrived at Inverness, having come up from London by easy stages.

It was a week after Neva's wild flight among the mountains of Ross-shire, but a fine, thick rain, like that through which Neva had so fruitlessly wandered, was falling like a dusky pall. The sky was dark and frowning, the air was chill and heavy, and the streets were dismal with the rain.

There was no carriage in waiting to convey the travellers to their destination, and they entered a cab and were conveyed to the Caledonian Hotel, where they passed the night.

The next morning the mist was still falling thickly, in a dreary, drizzling, listless fashion, as if it never intended to leave off. Lally looked out of her sitting-room window into the gloomy streets, and said:

"I fear it was a foolish idea to come to Scotland, and so far north too, at this season. And yet I wanted to come."

"It was the best thing we could do," said Mrs. Peters. "You were just pining to death in that great London house, Miss Lally."

"But if we had remained there, I might have seen Rufus again, perhaps," said the girl regretfully. "How shocked he seemed to be at beholding me! He stared at me as at a ghost. I suppose he has long ago ceased to love me. He loves another now. And yet, Mrs. Peters, for the sake of the dear old days when I was all the world to him, he might have followed me to the carriage—he might have traced us home."

"I told him that you were a poor governess, Miss," said Peters, who had not informed her young mistress of Rufus Black's visit to Mount street, having conceived a cordial dislike to Lally's young husband. "P'raps the young gentleman had to go back to his heiress that he is engaged to marry? Surely, Miss Lally, you wouldn't take him back, and he engaged to another lady?"

Lally's brown cheek flushed, and a sudden light leaped to her black eyes.

"Don't ask me, Peters," she said softly. "He was not so much to blame as you think. His father forced him to give me up. He's only a boy, Peters, and this is his birthday. He is twenty-one to-day. How he used to talk of his birthday, quite as if he were a lord, and expected to come into a property upon this day. He was weak and cowardly, but you could see how he had suffered, Peters. He will marry this beautiful and grand young lady, a baronet's daughter, and he'll go to court, and his bride will worship him; while I—"

She paused, sighing heavily.

"While you marry some great man, and go to court also, Miss Lally," said Peters.

The girl shook her head sorrowfully.

"He wrote that I am not his wife," she said, "but if I am not his wife, I shall never be the wife of any one else. I thought I was truly his wife, Peters, and I loved him as such, and a woman cannot unlove where she has loved with her whole soul. I shall consider myself in my own heart as the wife of Rufus so long as I live. His grand young bride cannot love him as I love him—my poor wronged boy! He would have been true to me always if his father had let him alone."

Before Mrs. Peters could reply there was a knock on the door, and Toppen, Lally's London footman, entered, his hat in his hand.

"The Heather Hills carriage waits, Miss Wroat," he announced respectfully. "The horses have been baited, and are fresh for the journey. We left the Hills yesterday, but broke down on the way, and did not get into Inverness until the evening, when we came to this hotel and found your name registered, and that you had retired for the night. The carriage has been put in repair, and we can leave at any hour it may please you."

"We will go now," said Lally. "Have the luggage taken down, Toppen. We will follow."

She rung for the hotel bill, and paid it. The luggage was carried down, and Lally put on her wrappings and bonnet and vail. Mrs. Peters also hastily attired herself, and they descended to the waiting vehicle.

The Heather Hills carriage proved to be an old-fashioned, cumbrous coach, painted green, and with wheels heavy enough for a luggage cart. It had a stout roof, upon which the luggage was piled. Lally was assisted into the coach, Mrs. Peters entered after her, the windows were drawn up nearly to the top, the footman mounted beside the coachman, who cracked his whip, and away the equipage went, to the edification of several small boys and hotel waiters.

There were plenty of lap blankets and travelling rugs, and Lally rolled herself snugly in a corner, and rubbing a spot on the window glass, tried to look out into the streets as they passed. Mrs. Peters also rolled herself up comfortably, and was silent.

The estate of Heather Hills was situated on the coast, between Fort George and Nairn—much nearer to Nairn in fact, than to Inverness—but the drive was pleasant in good weather, and the late Mrs. Wroat had always proceeded by carriage from Inverness, a good and sufficient reason why her successor should do so.

The house at Heather Hills was old and picturesque, with a lofty tower that commanded a fine view of Moray Frith. It was of mixed styles of architecture, and was homelike, while it was also imposing. The estate took its name from a low range of hills covered with heather, which formed a portion of its boundaries; but these hills were at a considerable distance from the house, which stood upon a tall and naked bluff, overlooking the Frith.

In summer the house was fanned with the salt sea-breezes, making it a delightful retreat. Seen, however, through a Scotch mist upon a day in late October, under a frowning sky, and with the dreariness of coming winter already apparent in the grounds, it was not so delightful. It looked cold, wind-swept, and deserted, to Lally, as she lowered her window and took a survey of her domain.

Around the house was a wide and fine lawn dotted with trees. There were flower-gardens, and the usual appanages to a fine country seat; but Lally's regards were fixed upon the mansion, which, wrapped in gray mist, seemed to its new owner one of the grandest as well as one of the loveliest houses she had ever seen.

The carriage passed up the long winding drive and halted in the wide porch. Toppen sprang nimbly down from the box, threw off his Mackintosh, and opened the coach door, assisting its occupants to alight.

Then he flung open the house door and led the way up the steps into the great hall, while the carriage went around to the stables.

In the wide hall the steward and his wife were waiting, to welcome the new owner of Heather Hills.

The former was a hale, sandy-haired Scotsman, with a plain honest face. The latter was a broad-faced motherly Scots-woman, who fell in love with the young mistress of the house at first sight.

"Miss Wroat," said Peters, "these are Mr. and Mrs. Lang, the steward and his wife."

Lally acknowledged the introduction with a gentle courtesy that won the Scotsman's heart.

"The house is all in order, Miss," he said respectfully. "There's a cook and house-maid from Inverness, and new furniture has been put in your own room, Miss, and your sitting-room has been newly furnished, as Mrs. Peters ordered. If the house is not to your liking, anything can be changed as you wish."

"I will show you up to your room, Miss," said Mrs. Lang, noticing Lally's pallor and evident weariness. "Dinner will be on the table in an hour."

Lally and Peters followed the steward's wife to the upper hall, and to a large octagon chamber, newly fitted up with a crimson carpet, crimson-covered chairs, and a cottage piano. A wood fire burned on the hearth, and an easy-chair in a white slip cover was drawn up before it.

"How cozy and pleasant!" exclaimed Lally. "All is warmth and brightness in here, but I can look from my windows upon the wild sea, white with fury. See the sails! I shall never tire of this charming room and charming prospect."

"Your bedroom adjoins this room, Miss Wroat," said Mrs. Lang, well pleased with Lally's praise. "Mrs. Peters' room is next beyond, and opens into yours."

"Do you live in the house, Mrs. Lang?" asked Lally.

"No, Miss. We live at the cottage half a mile back, which you passed just before turning into the grounds. We have lived there twenty years. No other spot in the world seems so like home to us. If we had to leave it now," and Mrs. Lang's voice trembled, "I think my old man would just fret himself to death."

"You won't have to leave it," said Lally cheerfully. "I do not intend that my aunt's old friends or faithful servants shall suffer through me. I desire Mr. Lang to continue his stewardship so long as he lives and I live. I do not know anything about the revenue of this little estate; Mr. Harris forgot to mention it, perhaps; but I am sure it cannot be in better hands than those in which my aunt placed it."

Mrs. Lang looked relieved and gratified.

"The estate has yielded some three hundred a year to Mrs. Wroat, after all salaries were paid," she explained. "It is not as profitable as most places of its size, but it has served as a grand country seat in its day, and the grounds are very extensive and beautiful. The house and outbuildings are in perfect repair; there is a pair of carriage horses, besides the work animals; and there are a fine lot of sheep and cattle of the best breeds, and they can be made a source of greater revenue if you are willing to go to some outlay for stock."

"We will see to all that," said Lally, beginning to feel an interest in her new possession. "I would like to talk with Mr. Lang about it some day when he has leisure. I wish you and Mr. Lang would remain to dinner with us."

The steward's wife accepted the invitation with delight, and went down to acquaint her husband with his prospects for the future.

Lally made her toilet, with Mrs. Peters' assistance.

"I can see my future," said Lally, with the first gleam of brightness Mrs. Peters had seen in her black eyes and on her gypsy face since Mrs. Wroat's death. "I dare say I shall in time go to town and the house in Mount street for three months in the year; and I shall live here at Heather Hills, and raise prize pigs and prize sheep and prize Highland cattle, and look out of the windows at the sails; and so the years will pass, and I shall grow gray. And, oh, I'll get up a charity school of some sort and teach it myself; and the children, instead of being disfigured with bag-like blouses and horrid starched caps, shall all wear the prettiest pink and blue dresses, according to their complexions, and the prettiest white ruffled aprons; and when I die they shall stand in two rows around my grave, and may be somebody will say that I was a 'mother in Israel.'"

It was not a very bright picture of the future of one so young and pretty as Lally, with fortune and all good gifts. She seemed intended for a home fairy, to cheer and uphold and strengthen a kindly, loving husband; to gather little children of her own to her breast; and good Mrs. Peters could not help praying that such might be Lally's destiny.

When the young mistress of Heather Hills had changed her black bombazine travelling dress for a black lustreless silk trimmed heavily with crape, and provided with white crape ruffles at the throat, and had put on her jet jewelry, she was ready for dinner. Her black hair had been gathered into braids, and was ornamented with a black bow, and she looked as she was, gentle, refined, intelligent, weighted with sorrow too heavy for her to bear, yet meek and patient as some young martyr.

"We will go down now to our guests, Peters," she said. "How soon will you be ready?"

Mrs. Peters' face flushed.

"Miss Lally," she said hesitatingly, "it is not suitable I should dine with you. I am only your maid, you know. Mrs. Wroat had me always dine with her, because otherwise she must have dined alone, and she liked company. Mr. Lang is the younger son of a Scottish laird, and he might be affronted to dine with me."

"But I insist," said Lally.

"No, no, Miss Lally. When you are alone, I'll dine with you for company," said Mrs. Peters stoutly, "but I assure you I would rather eat by myself when there's company. I won't have any one say that my young mistress doesn't know what is suitable to her station. If I could, I'd set you up on a pedestal above everybody else; indeed I would, Miss Lally. I would like to be housekeeper here, and manage the servants, but I can't dine with you when there's company."

"You shall do as you please, Peters," said Lally. "You are my friend as well as my maid—my only friend, Peters. If you don't like to dine with company, you shall dine where you please. There, give me a kiss, Peters, and I'll go down."

Peters gave the desired kiss, with many additional ones, and wiped her eyes as Lally went out, and muttered:

"She is just the bonniest, sweetest young lady that ever lived. If that young gentleman comes up here to see her, he'll go away with a flea in his ear—see if he don't."

Lally went down to her guests and talked with them until the dinner bell rung. Mr. Lang offered her his arm with quite the air of a man of fashion, giving his wife his other arm, and the three went in to dinner.

The dining-room was long and low, with two great wood fires on capacious hearths, and a seven-windowed oriel overhanging the sea. It was bright with ruddy colors and fine china and gleaming silver, and the dinner upon the oval table was in keeping with the room. It was a feast fit for a princess, and had been ordered by Mrs. Lang, with a view to presenting to the heiress of Heather Hills as many varieties of birds and game and fish off her estate as could be obtained.

After dinner, Lally had a long business conversation with Mr. Lang, and repeated the promise she had already given the steward's wife. She appointed another interview with the steward for the following day, and about dusk the visitors took their leave.

Lally spent the evening in playing upon her piano, in singing, and in thought.

The next morning she walked over to the steward's cottage, and made a brief visit. The day was dark and gloomy, but it did not rain. In the afternoon the steward came up to the great house to see Lally, and he remained until nearly dinner. At five o'clock Lally and Mrs. Peters dined together in the dining-room overlooking the sea, a dozen candles lighted and sending their bright gleams out over the troubled waters.

"You look better to-night, Miss Lally," said her faithful attendant. "You will find new interests up in this region, and will find that you have something to live for yet."

Lally smiled sadly, but did not answer.

They still lingered in the dining-room, Lally standing in the great oriel window and looking out upon the sea, which was being furiously beaten by the winds, when Mrs. Peters heard a carriage come up the drive and halt in the carriage porch.

The good woman's face turned pale. She glanced at her young mistress, but Lally heard no sound save the tumult of the winds and the waves.

"It's a wild night," said the young girl. "I don't see a sail in the Frith. The boats have all made for harbor."

At that moment a double knock was heard upon the front door, and Mrs. Peters heard the house-maid going to the door.

But Lally's face was pressed against the cold glass, and she did not hear the summons for admittance.

"The wind is rising," the girl said, with a shudder. "I see a steamer coming in. She'll make port just in time. I would not like to be on the sea to-night."

Mrs. Peters heard the front door open.

With a nervous glance at her young mistress, she stole out into the hall.

The front door was open, and a gust of wind was sweeping through the hall like a hurricane. Upon the threshold a man wearing a greatcoat and broad-brimmed artist's hat, a man with a slender figure and eager face, was standing, talking with the house-maid.

Mrs. Peters recognized the unwelcome guest as Rufus Black.

"I want to see Mrs. Peters," he was saying earnestly—"Miss Wroat's companion. I have come up expressly from London to see her. I cannot go back to Inverness without seeing Mrs. Peters. She is my wife!"

"Lawks, sir!" said the house-maid, with a wild idea that her visitor was a lunatic.

The reader, who knows how naturally Rufus Black's mistake had arisen, will not wonder at it.

"I must see her," persisted Rufus, his voice trembling. "Tell Mrs. Peters a gentleman wishes to see her—"

At that moment Mrs. Peters, grim and terrible, resolving to protect her young mistress from one she deemed unworthy of her, marched out into the full glare of the hall lamp, and placing her arms akimbo, and assuming her most warlike aspect, exclaimed:

"Well, sir! and what may you want of me, sir? *I* am Mrs. Peters!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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—The real wants of nature are the measure of enjoyments, as the foot is the measure of the shoe. We can call only the want of what is necessary, poverty.

THE DESERTED FARM-HOUSE.

BY NATHAN D. URNER.

Now, as the new leaves flush the boughs,
And in the glades the violets gleam,
I look once more on the old farm-house,
And pause by the well-remembered stream.
Still, heavy and deep, the hedgerows mark
The pebbly walk that winds along,
And from shadow to shadow, now bright, now dark,
The water moves on, with its quiet song.

But in vain to the south wind's kiss I bare
My aching brow, to soothe its grief;
In vain does my spirit seek to share
In the spring-tide joy of the woods in leaf.
Deserted and lone is the farm-house gray,
And its loneliness sadly haunts the heart,
Like a ghost that has passed from the body away,
But lingers still, and is loath to depart.

The step that was wont to spring so light
Down the pebbly walk to the low-bridged stream,
And the soft, dark eye, with its welcome bright,
Are silent and dimmed, or live but in dream.
Hushed is the voice that to me alone
Murmured of love that can never die:
I passed, but an hour ago, the stone
That marks her grave in the church-yard nigh.

The old folks have followed their pride and pet,
And neglected since has the farm-house stood,
A gray, sad image of sorrow set
In the glad, green heart of the blooming wood.
Nevermore for me can the spring seem fair,
Where once the light of all seasons broke
In waves of gold on her nut-brown hair,
And her voice to music the greenwood woke.

But here let me cull these violets gay,
Mixed with these simples of blue and gold,
To wreathe, as mementos, the gravestone gray,
Where under she sleeps in the church-yard old.
But first to my lips I will press their bloom,
Ere leaving them there to wither at will,
And their fragrance bear to my distant home,
With the memories that are fadeless still.

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THAT STRAGGLER.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

"Well, Martha," said Aunt Emma, entering the room where her niece sat at work, "here I am, and in a pretty fix too. What on earth I'm going to do I can't tell. There—don't come near me; for all I know, you may catch something if you do."

"I'm not afraid of catching anything," said Martha. "What has happened now? Theodore taken the measles, or Uncle Van the whooping cough?"

"For all *I* know, they're well," said Aunt Emma, "though in such times as these, with all sorts of catching things about, who is to tell who'll have 'em next? They're both down at New York, and they are coming home Saturday night, and I've made fine preparations for them. What do you suppose I've taken into my house? Well, it's a straggler. And this morning, first thing I knew, in flew my new help, that I fetched home only last week, and says she:

"'Missus, I'm off!'

"'Why, Bridget?' says I.

"'That straggler,' says she, 'has got the small-pox! I know the signs of it well, and I don't stay where it is an hour.'

"And before I got my clothes on, she was off. And that awful straggler moaning and talking like a loon in the kitchen bedroom, and very bad with it, as Dr. Praddigle says, for I sent for him at once. And what *shall* I do? I'm going to start for the town, and have the hospital send for him at once; but there'll be pa and Theo. coming home, perhaps, before they get him off. And infection in the house, and *I* the cause of it! O dear! that horrible straggler!"

"Poor soul!" said Martha. "Some poor man travelling to find work, perhaps. Some one's father, or son, or husband, no doubt."

"Yes, it is a pity," said Aunt Emma; "but I can't help thinking of Theo."

Martha pondered for a while.

"Is black Jim going to run away?" she asked.

"No," said Aunt Emma. "He had small-pox once, and he is not afraid of it. O dear, Martha, I can't keep it out of my mind that Theo. catches everything so easy, and will be so likely to take it."

"Yes," said Martha, "a mother is naturally anxious; but I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll go over and settle matters. You stay here with ma, and telegraph to uncle to come straight here, instead of going home. You see I'm never afraid of any disease, however contagious, and I've been vaccinated so lately."

"You? What an idea—a young unmarried woman! Suppose you're marked with it?" cried Aunt Emma. "I sha'n't allow it. All for a straggler too—a poor, miserable creature in a red shirt! If it was a friend, or even a neighbor, or anybody of importance, it would be different. But a straggler!"

"A human being all the same," said Martha.

"What will your ma say?" screamed Aunt Emma.

"Ma always allows me to do as I please," said Martha. "Tell her I may not, probably shall not, be back for several days. I've had experience with sick people, and I know that a journey in an ambulance, over miles of rough road, and all the delay consequent on the proceedings of charity, may kill this poor man. Your house is quite isolated. The kitchen and kitchen chamber are scarcely a part of the house; and if Jim will help me, I'll do my part. It's nothing to what I did at the hospital."

"Oh, dear," said Aunt Emma, "I know you went to the hospital after the war, but wounds an't catching; and being engaged to William Price, I suppose you felt romantic about soldiers; but small-pox and a straggler is a very different sort of thing."

Martha's eyes filled with tears.

"I loved all soldiers for Willie's sake," she said; "that is very true. But it is partly because of my loss that I feel it my duty to go now. I never knew whether any woman was with my Will, when he died, nor how he died, nor where. If some one could tell me that they nursed him well in his last hours, my heart would be lighter. And this man who is suffering, and within my reach, shall not be neglected. If he dies, some other woman may know that the best was done for her dead; and if he lives, I may help to save him for wife and children, or poor old mother." And Martha hurried out of the room, and returned in her hat and shawl.

The war between North and South had not long been over; and Martha, whose betrothed husband was among the missing when the troops returned to that quiet place in the Granite State, had been an active nurse in the hospital for several months. Aunt Emma knew that she might as well hope to keep the tide from coming in, as to keep Martha from what she thought her duty, and said no more.

"Martha knows what to do. She is a sensible gal," was all the mother said, when she came in from the pea patch with her apron full of peas. "She'll manage finely, and I'm glad to have you and your folks here, sister Emma."

So Aunt Emma telegraphed for her husband and son, and with many self-reproaches awaited the result of what she called "Martha's ridiculous caper."

"The straggler" was a man with a full beard that seemed to cover half his face, and he was in a state of high delirium when Martha reached the house. As for his features, they were swollen and spotted almost out of human likeness, and his shabby clothes were very coarse and scanty.

He lay in what was known as the "odd hands' bedroom," and with him were the doctor and black Jim.

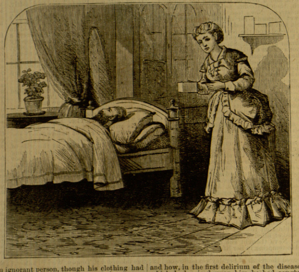
"You're a brave girl," said the doctor, when Martha told him of her intention; "and I've no doubt you'll be quite safe. I'll do my part, Miss Martha, and Jim will help us."

"Sartin sure, Massa," said Jim.

"The long journey would be death to him," said the doctor. "He's awfully worn out now. Perhaps you'll save some poor woman's husband for her, my dear."

Then the black man, obeying the doctor's instructions, clothed the poor delirious patient in clean linen, which Martha had brought with her; and the old clothes were burnt, and a trinket which had been tied about the stranger's neck safely put away by black Jim's honest hands. And Martha Bruce took up her weary task, knowing exactly what lay before her. She had left a happy home and pleasant surroundings, to become a sort of enchanted princess in a castle full of horror to all others. She had taken upon herself a ban which made friends fear her. Not one of her companions would have approached those infected walls for any consideration; nor would she have desired it. Jim was devoted; but the poor object on the bed, so terrible to look upon, had no gratitude for her. Deliriously he raved and gabbled, regarding her as his enemy more than half the time. The disease had closed his eyes almost from the first, and his imagination had its own wild way, unsoftened by any glimpse of her pretty, sweet womanly face. It would have seemed a thankless task to any one but a true Christian.

Jim provided food without leaving the place, and every now and then a bowl of custard or a pie or a cake was found perched upon a gate post, at a safe distance, with woeful little notes from Aunt Emma attached to it. So the days glided by, lonely and uncheered; and, worst of all, the patient was growing worse. What manner of man he was in his natural condition she could not tell. His own mother would not have known him now. But his language was not that of an ignorant person, though his clothing had been so poor. Martha began to feel a strange interest in him, to wonder what his story might have been, and to think that if he died she should wish to know who he was, that she might tell his friends all that there was to tell about him.



"Missy," said Jim one night, "I's powerful sleepy. S'pose Missy be skeered to sit up alone?"

"No, Jim," said Martha. "Lie down and sleep upon the kitchen lounge. I will call you if I want you."

Then she took up her watch in the infected room. She also was sleepy, but she fought with slumber bravely. Outside the rain beat against the panes; within the patient babbled in an awesome sort of way. Hitherto he had talked of goblins and of fiends, now he seemed addressing real people.

"I say, Johnny Reb.—I say—just a drop. I'm burning with thirst. A mouthful of water and a piece of bread. I say, I'd give it to you—if— Lord help us! look at his feet—look! the one that died just now. Starving! Starving! O for the scraps the dogs used to have at home! Oh! Ah!—Ah! he's crossed the dead line, and they've shot him down. Lord help us!"

The girl was on her feet, and at his side

"He must have been a soldier," she said, as she held the cooling drink to his lips. "An Andersonville prisoner, perhaps."

The man swallowed the contents of the cup greedily.

"Good!" he said.

It was his first acknowledgment of any comfort or alleviation, and it did the nurse's heart good.

"Ah, you're not so bad, Johnny Reb. Get it for me, won't you? It was here. You took it. Give it back—"

"What?" said Martha, speaking slowly. "Tell me what."

"Her picture," said the man. He felt about his neck. "Ah! give it back," he moaned. "I want to die with it here. It can't do you any good—give it back."

The girl remembered that Jim had taken something from the man's neck when he took off his weather-stained garments, and had placed it in a little tin box on a certain shelf in the room. Leaving the bedside, she went to the box and peeped in. There lay a plain gold locket.

"His sweetheart, or his wife, I suppose," she said to herself, and with a natural curiosity opened the case. Within it was her own portrait—the little photograph which she had given William Price when they parted.

The poor girl felt that she needed all her courage. The hope that suddenly possessed her seemed like madness. She crept back to the bedside, and looked at the face upon the pillow. There was no possibility of recognizing that. The hair was like William's, but there was a bald spot on the crown, and William had worn no beard whatever.

"Oh, Father in heaven!" cried Martha, folding her hands and pressing them against her heart, "teach me the truth. If this is William lying here before me, let me know it. If I am dreaming, cure me of my madness."

"Here is the picture," she said, in a calmer tone, a few moments after. "Whose picture is it?"

"Hers," said the man, groping in his blindness.

The locket touched his hand, he clasped it fervently.

"I've got it now," he said. "You shall never have it again. I told her it should die with me. It shall, Martha—dear Martha."

And then Martha knew that it was the one whom she had mourned as dead who lay before her: loathsome to the sight; unconscious of her presence; doomed, perhaps, to death; but she had found him. It was he. A strange mixture of horror and delight possessed her, and she fell upon her knees and prayed—not calmly now, as she had prayed every night for the life of the man she had nursed so carefully, but as love prays for love in its hour of greatest peril.

Through the night she watched—through the night she listened to the wild talk that told her the story of three years of parting, and in the dawn saw a strange change take place. The man lay still and silent; his bosom hardly moved; his breathing was inaudible. Was it for the better, or for the worse? She could not tell. Wild thoughts of running for the doctor, through the night and the storm, possessed her. She knew that Jim would say that he could not go until daybreak. Should she wake Jim, and tell him that it was her William lying here before them?

She asked herself these questions, but something kept her quiet. Her comprehension of the man's condition, drawn from her hospital experience, told her that nothing would avail. She must wait. Oh, that waiting! The gray dawn changed to crimson day. The stormy winds had ceased, and a blue sky burst through the clouds, and the birds sang clear and shrill, and looking at that disfigured face she saw a blessed change upon it. The eyes were open, and turned upon her, and they were the eyes of a man in his senses. She could not speak; she could only look at him. And then a faint voice fell upon her ears:

"It can't be Martha, after all."

And she knew that it was her lover, indeed, and that God had spared him to her.

* * * * * *

"Martha," cried Aunt Emma, rushing down the path pellmell, but stopping, with due regard to caution, a yard from her niece. "My gracious! and you've not caught it; and the straggler is well. And you've disinfected the house, and put on new clothes; and— Dear, how well you look! And I suppose the poor straggler has gone home?"

"Not yet," said Martha. "And when he goes I'm going with him."

"Eh!" cried Aunt Emma.

"I'm going to marry your straggler," said Martha.

Aunt Emma gave a faint shriek.

"O aunt!" cried Martha, "it was Will.—my Will. It is my Will, come back to me."

And then she told them how, after a long and horrible imprisonment, her lover had sought his home, begging his way sometimes, and how, in the first delirium of the disease which had seized upon him, he had sought shelter in Aunt Emma's home, not guessing it was that of a friend, and only knowing that his steps were too feeble to bear him longer on his way.

"And the doctor says I have saved his life, aunt," said Martha. "And he's just as handsome as ever, and I am so happy!"

"And you went to nurse him when you thought he was only a straggler!" said Aunt Emma. "It's the Lord's providence."

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SCIENCE.

Mount Vitos is very nearly the central point of European Turkey, but the region about it, although classical, has until recently remained comparatively unknown to geographers. In 1869, this district, which is the source of four of the most important rivers in Turkey, was explored by Dr. F. von Hochstetter—now the geologist of the north island of New Zealand—and he has lately published an account of his researches there. He describes Mount Vitos as 7,600 feet in height, and as bearing the same relation to Sofia, the capital of Southern Bulgaria, as Vesuvius does to Naples and Table Mountain to Cape Town. It is a weather prophet, he says, for the whole surrounding region, a summer mist around its head foretelling the approach of gentle showers upon the plains below, while the winter snow-cap portends heavy lowland storms. There are iron deposits south of the mountain, but Dr. Hochstetter does not regard them as capable of great development, although the Turkish government entertains more hopeful views.

An able French geographer, M. Vivien de Saint Martin, announces his belief that certain of the islanders of the Pacific constitute a peculiar, primordial white race, resembling the Caucasian type, and characterized by oval faces, straight or aquiline noses, and thick, sleek hair. This race is represented by the native inhabitants of Borneo, Sumatra, Luzon, Formosa, and the islands of the South Pacific. It is proposed to name it the Oceanian race, because of its insular origin; but we hope the fact of its existence will be indisputably established before that term is applied to the tribes which are supposed to belong to it.

The physical condition of centenarians was the subject of a paper read at a recent meeting of the Anthropological Institute, by Sir D. Gibb, Bart., M. D., who stated that he had examined six persons, each certainly one hundred years old, or over, in all of whom he found the organs of circulation and respiration in a condition resembling that which belongs to the prime of life rather than to old-age. None of the changes usually noticed in persons of the age of seventy years could be observed. The intelligence was perfect, and the integrity of the nervous system complete.

The source of the celebrated Asiatic river Oxus has hitherto been supposed to be a lake called Sirikul, on the plateau of Pamir. Recent geographical researches in this region show that such is not the fact, but that five branches, proceeding from as many different lakes, unite to form the main stream. The largest of these lakes is the famous Kara Kul, the Black Lake or Dragon Lake of the Chinese. It has also been discovered that the Pamir highlands are a prolongation of the Himalayas, and not, as Humboldt believed, a transverse range.

The San Gregorio meteorite and several other huge meteoric masses which are known to exist in Northern Mexico, have recently been described by American writers. There are at least five in that country, and the discovery of a sixth has lately been reported. Dr. Smith of Kentucky believes them to be the result of two falls. That at San Gregorio is over six feet long, four feet wide, and more than five feet high. Its weight is estimated at five tons, and it consists principally of iron, with a little nickel and cobalt.

No well-marked race of domestic dogs can be distinguished in Brazil, with the exception of those employed in hunting deer. Dr. R. Hensel, in a paper on the subject recently published at Frankfort, says that the European races introduced into the country soon degenerate. The pointer, for example, gradually changes so that in a few generations the head becomes shaped like that of a bull-dog, although the ears are not shortened.

The star known as T Coronae Borealis, which burst forth so suddenly and brightly in the year 1868, and subsequently waned into telescopic size, has maintained an unchanged degree of brightness for the last two years. Now, however, it is beginning perceptibly to fade still further. So says Mr. Backhouse of Sunderland, in a letter to the London *Times*.

Mr. Charles Twite, the newly appointed geologist to the King of Siam, who is to do field work during the cooler months, and to instruct the noblemen and gentlemen of the Siamese Court in the science of Geology during the hot portion of the year, has arrived safely at Bangkok.

The double-horned Sumatran rhinoceros lately received at the Zoological Gardens, London, is remarkable for being covered with hair, which is long and coarse on her back, and on the rest of her body resembles the downy hair of a baby's head.

A commission has been appointed by the Paris Academy of Sciences to investigate the tonic properties of sea-water, and its use in the preparation of articles of food.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PRAIRIE CHICKS (Floyd) writes: "We would like your advice on the following subject. There is a young man in our neighborhood, and this is the way he acts: He will take a young lady to ride, or to some place of amusement, two or three times; then he will take another, and then another, until he has taken about half a dozen different young ladies, and probably he would not stop then, only all the other young ladies of his set are provided with other company; and so he goes on, taking first one and then another. He tells each young lady that he does not intend to go with any girl right along, for they are apt to think that he means something by it, and he would not like to have them do that, for he does not intend to marry them. He says if he goes with one right along, people will think he is engaged, and that it will keep other young men away; and he is afraid he does wrong to ask her at all, but thinks, as long as he goes with so many, it will keep things all right. He took one of these girls to a party one evening, and met a girl there that he had seen only once before. And his partner heard him make arrangements with her to go to some place of amusement the next week. Now I want to know if it was using the lady with him well. I think it was not. She would naturally feel slighted, and of course would not enjoy herself very much the rest of the evening. Would there be anything wrong in her speaking to him about it, when he asked her how she enjoyed herself? Now we do not want you to think we are in love with this young man. I do not think there is a girl in the whole lot that would marry him. We like to go when we have a good chance, but object decidedly to such treatment. And we doubt some of this young man's fine stories, and think he is trying to see how many girls he can go with this winter; but we may be mistaken, and would like your opinion of him, and your advice as to how we shall use him." You cannot do anything more than to let him alone. That you are perfectly at liberty to do if you choose. The young lady you speak of could tell him that she felt badly at his inviting another, as you suggest; but would it not be very silly in her? What occasion has she to be dissatisfied with his inviting the next, any more than the next was to feel dissatisfied with his having invited her? On the whole, we can understand that this young man occasions you some perplexity, but we do not perceive any remedy for it, except the one we have suggested: *let him alone*, or rather *let him* GO *alone*.

DILEMMA writes: "About a year ago, I fell in love with a young lady, to whom I immediately declared my feelings and asked her to marry me. She promptly responded that my love was fully reciprocated, and that she would marry me when she arrived at the age of eighteen. Our plans being made known to her parents, they acquiesced, and we were as happy a pair as was ever stricken by the hand of Cupid. Last fall, her father removed to a neighboring city. She had since her infancy resided in a retired village. She became so enamored of the gayeties of city life that her whole being was changed, and even her love for me, which I believed unchangeable, was expelled from her heart. She accordingly dispatched a note to me, requesting me to release her from an engagement which had become distasteful to her. I sought her at once, and demanded an explanation, which she responded to by declaring that she intended living and dying in single blessedness. I could not release her, for I still love her with all the impetuosity of a passionate nature; and if you can and will suggest a plan by which I can regain her heart, you will secure my undying gratitude." Comply with her request to release her, and devote yourself to the society of others for a while. She may conclude that, after all, she loves you better than she thought she did. That is one way. Another is to do as you are doing—adhere to your engagement, and persecute her into a reluctant marriage with you. But would that be well?

LUTIE says: "I have read and profited much by your answers to correspondents, and although I have never troubled you before, I will do so now. Should a lady, on getting up from the table where several persons are seated, excuse herself, and who to—the hostess, or to the whole company? Is there any impropriety in a young lady's writing to a young gentleman the first letter, he being a third cousin, and having previously requested the young lady to correspond with him, but she refusing, saying her father did not permit her to correspond with young gentlemen? He afterwards sends her a present, and she writes and thanks him for it. He answers her letter, and again *earnestly* requests her to correspond with him. Would there then be any impropriety in her answering his letter, her father having previously given his consent to their corresponding? By answering the above at your earliest convenience, you will greatly oblige a constant reader of the *Ledger*." A lady or gentleman has only to obtain permission from the hostess. A third cousin (male) in *these circumstances* may get the "first" letter from a lady, more particularly as she has already written and had a reply.

B. S. (Charleston) says: "Will you be kind enough to answer a few questions for me in your next *Ledger?* An eminent preacher has asked these two questions, and I cannot find the answers to them: 1st. Who was David's mother? 2d. What was the name of Pharaoh's daughter? Please answer them, and tell me where to find the passages in the Bible." With profound respect for the eminence of the preacher, we think he is wasting your time. The first is a catch-question, to which no certain answer can be given; and all we know of Pharaoh's daughter is in the book of Exodus, to search which is not a heavy, and may be a profitable, exercise. But he should tell you *which Pharaoh*. If he means that daughter of Pharaoh who drew Moses out of the water, you must refer him for a name to Josephus, Artapanus, and the Arabic traditions, leaving him to decide between Thermuthis, Merrhis, and Asiat.

PERINFITA says: "Suppose a lady and gentleman get married and keep it secret, can they in the course of two or three months be married over again—if they do not live together—by the same or any other minister? My friends say it would not be legal; but I want to know why not. I don't think it would be bigamy, for he would be marrying the same persons." We do answer questions for other people; but we usually require them to be at least slightly practical, and to imply some good sense. As to this question, a form has to be filled up, in order to being married, in which the parties describe themselves as "married" or "unmarried." How would the parties describe themselves in the second form? If they say "unmarried," it is falsehood; if married, their second proceeding is folly. If they can get over the first objection, the law affords great latitude in the second direction.

CLERK writes: "I lived in the country, but came to the city last November, and have been clerking in a cigar and tobacco store since. My salary pays my board, and keeps me in clothes, but I cannot lay away anything for the future. I thought of leaving it and learning a trade, but having no friends to ask their advice I thought I would trouble you for it. What I ask is this: Which do you think would be better for me: to stick to what I am at, or leave it and apprentice myself to some good trade? Please give me your advice, and tell me what trade I should learn." We think that a good trade would be preferable to your present employment. In making a selection you should choose the one best suited to your own tastes, and which you think you would be most likely to succeed in.

ANNIE B. (Wheeling) says: "I am an unmarried lady, possessed of some property, and am eternally bothered by seeing attached to my name the word 'spinster.' As you can answer everything, pray do we derive this title from our mother Eve? If so, what did she spin?" Mother Eve did not spin, so far as appears by the record. She was, however, the first cause of the art of spinning in others, for prior to her temptation and fall there was no occasion for spinning. If the gentlemen in your section are such fortune-hunters as they are reputed in other places now-a-days, it must be your own fault if you, being a lady of property, are still obliged to read "spinster" to your name. In law documents spinster simply means an unmarried woman.

D. L. says: "Having been an attentive reader of your interesting paper, I take the liberty of addressing you. I am a young lawyer, and not very well off. I am deeply in love with a young lady of our town, whose father occupies a high position in society, and is very wealthy. The young lady has consented to marry me, but her father is opposed to our match, and wishes her to marry a young banker, whom she despises. What, under the circumstances, shall I do?" Prosecute the suit by all honorable means; give evidence of ability and industry, and trust to the young lady to get a verdict in your favor. That is what we should do in the circumstances.

MISS NEVA H. says: "Being an old subscriber for your valuable paper, I hope you will not hesitate in answering a question for me, although it may be simple for some, but not so with me. From what did the 'House of Commons' derive its name?" The Barons maintained the right to have their chamber and representatives, now called Peers; and the rest of the common people had their representatives elected from burghs and counties, and called the representatives of the Commoners, or Commons' House, to distinguish it from the Peers' House, or House of Lords.

AN OLD SUBSCRIBER (New York) says: "I take this liberty of writing to you, seeing how willingly you answer questions. I would like to ask you what are the duties of an assistant purser on a steamer, and how a person should proceed to get that position?" "First catch your hare, then skin it." So we begin with getting the appointment. Secure the favor of a ship owner, and get the place from him. A captain can sometimes recommend and get you it. The duties you will find to be, all that the purser wishes to shirk, and that you can be got to do.

DR. DRYASDUST (Peekskill) "inquires whether near-sightedness can be cured, he being afflicted in that way. Having derived considerable information by reading the answers to correspondents, he takes this method of making known his ignorance." Short-sightedness is not usually curable; but a skillful oculist should be consulted, and his directions followed as to making the most of the eyes, and preserving their powers.

C. W. says: "I have loved a young lady for the past three years, and know I am loved in return, although I have never mentioned marriage to her, having been in circumstances where I could not do so; but now I have a store of my own, with a stock of $4000, and paying me, net profits, about $15 a day. Don't you think I would do right to offer her my hand, under these circumstances?" Certainly. We hope she will like you.

EMMA.—"Please inform me through your answers to correspondents what the letters V. D. M. mean when they are affixed to a minister's name." They have been taken to mean "Very dry man;" but that is a mistake. No wise man would so write himself down. They are the initials of three Latin words, meaning "Minister of the Word of God."

F. A. J. asks: "Will you be kind enough to answer me in your next issue what was the highest rank President Grant held in the army prior to his election as President? Also, what ranks do Sherman and Sheridan hold at the present day?" Grant's highest rank was that of General. Sherman is now General, and Sheridan Lieutenant-General.

IRENE (Charleston) says: "Will you oblige an attentive reader of your *Ledger* by answering the following question? for I am sorely puzzled between obeying the inclinations of my own heart and in fulfilling the fifth commandment. I am very young, but have long been accustomed to question my own thoughts, and to form opinions upon different subjects by myself. One of my parents belongs to the ——— Church, and in its doctrines have I been brought up until I concluded my fifteenth year. I was then placed under the influence of a lady who was a follower of an opposite religion, and to whom I became tenderly attached, and who evinced the same attachment to me. She invited me several times to go to her church, which invitation I accepted, with my parents' full consent. I have conceived a great attachment for her religion, and have had many things explained to me, which before appeared exceedingly ridiculous, but which I now firmly believe in. Before I ever entered the doors of the ——— Church, and before I ever was exposed to the influence of that friend, I repeatedly told my parents I never would be a follower of their religion, having conceived the greatest dislike to it, which aversion I am unable to explain. Although I know that such a declaration gives them pain, yet they have told me that they would rather see me a member of any other denomination than the one of my choice. Now what worries me is this: I do not want to join a church, while they are living, to which they are opposed, without their full consent; and if I should live after their death, I should respect their wishes too much to attach myself to anything whatsoever which did not have their full sanction. Please, kind Editor, advise me." In our judgment the basis of religion is the sacred Scripture. It is addressed to the reason of each human being to whom it comes. One is to decide questions of religion—so soon as capable of deciding—on a careful examination of them, and on no other considerations. Even the preference of parents, while we give due weight to the verdict of their judgment, cannot be a solid reason for our religious convictions. While still children and dependent, we are by law and common-sense accountable to them; when no longer so, we are accountable to Him who made us.

R. M. J. (Philadelphia) says: "Will you please answer the question which I ask? I have been acquainted with a young gentleman for four years, and he came to see me for a year regularly every week, until last May, when a supposed friend came and told me that the gentleman was deceitful to me, for he was taking another lady to the opera, which he thought very wrong—so he said. I, thinking a great deal of him, was very jealous if he noticed another lady. Then I sent him a missive, saying I did not wish his addresses any longer, as he preferred another; but I don't think he did. Last summer I wrote him a note asking forgiveness, but he would not grant it. In reply to my note he said, if I was willing, we should speak when we met. I am constantly thinking of him, and he haunts my dreams. Please give a foolish girl advice. Do not throw this aside, for it will relieve an aching heart." This comes from listening, in the first instance, to a busybody in other people's matters. Now that things have taken this form, you can do no more. A woman cannot go upon her knees—with our present sentiments—to a man and pay her addresses to him. You must preserve your own self-respect, and trust to returning good sense and affection in your former lover; and if they do not return, you have, like many another, to be brave and carry your cross.

J. B. (Baltimore) writes: "I became acquainted with a young lady several years ago, but never visited her until lately—she residing in the country, and I in the city. The last time I visited the neighborhood, I called to see her, and made an engagement to call again; but when I fulfilled it, she could not be seen, on account of being sick. I returned home before seeing her, and then wrote, inquiring after her health, and asking for a friendly correspondence. A good while has elapsed, and I have received no answer. She received my letter, I know. She professes to be a Christian, so I think there is no deceit in her. Now I wish to ask you, do you not think my letter was justly entitled to an answer of some kind? I can put but two constructions upon her silence, which must be either the result of ignorance, or an intended slight. My manner toward her was always as a mere friend, which makes her conduct seem strange. What do you think of it?" You had no right to expect an answer of any kind to a letter addressed to a lady on such slight acquaintance. The "ignorance" was on your part, not on hers. She was under no obligation whatever to answer you.

W. H. (Brooklyn, L. I.) says: For the first time I come to you for advice. I am nineteen years old, and for a little over a year have been keeping company with a young man of good habits and family, but at present he has no business; is seeking for a situation; is one year older than myself. My friends oppose me in encouraging his visits, but I cannot make them confess a single fault he has; still they seem bitterly opposed to him, and it causes me many unpleasant feelings. Please advise me what to do. Shall I give him up, whom I dearly love, for those who do not seem to think as much of me as they might? My parents leave the matter to me, and I appeal to you." Of course it is a fine thing to be without a specific fault, but there is a class of persons roughly described as "little good, little ill," who sometimes find it hard to get bread and butter. Your friends, perhaps, count him such. But if your parents do not oppose, but approve, and you have reason to believe in the sincerity of his attachment, you have our permission to marry him as soon as he can support you. You are not bound to please all your acquaintances.

HARD WORKER says: "I am a young man, eighteen years of age; have a good education, some business experience and a determination to succeed. I would like to go to Iowa, or some neighboring State, as I hear so much of the West being the place of all others for a young man obliged to support himself. But I abhor farming. If I was sure of immediate employment at anything but farming, I would go immediately, and as I earn money, invest it in land. But I have not enough to support myself any length of time, while seeking employment. Can you tell me how I may gain information as to whether I could find immediate employment in any of the Western States? And please give me your advice, whether I had better stay in my present, not at all lucrative, position in this city, or go West? which, as I said above, I had much rather do, provided I was sure of immediate employment." You had better remain where you are, and be very economical until you shall have laid up enough to support you for some time, if you should not happen to find immediate employment when you go West.

T. B. (Mount Sterling, Ky.) says: "As you seem to be ever ready to speak kind words to those in distress, I appeal to you for advice in a matter which stands about thus: I have arrived at the age of maturity; have very limited means, and only an ordinary education. I am deep in love with a young girl of fifteen—that is, we are both in love, and just here is where the trouble lies. Now, had I better enter into some permanent business and cultivate that love, or had I better try to get a finished education, and run the risk of meeting some fair one in the future whom I may love as well?" There is an "eclectic" course, as they say in college. Hold on to this love, and get the education also; for why should a girl of fifteen be married? A man who deliberately resolves to throw away a pure love usually suffers in some way. If this plan will not get you means, then take the business plan. You can have no right to discard one whom you love, and who loves you, if the attachment is proper and lawful.

E. L. M. (Sullivan Co., N. Y.) writes: "I am a young man twenty-two years of age, and am very desirous of learning the printer's trade, but can get no situation with printers that I am acquainted with. Could I get a situation in the city to learn all kinds of printing, and would an apprentice get enough to pay board and clothing? I have set some type, and worked a hand press in a country office." We can answer your question in this way: you can make enough to board and clothe you, because *you can board and clothe yourself, in one way or another, on whatever you make.* Young men must not be too particular about their dress and fare while they are acquiring a trade which will afford them the means of an independent livelihood. You can put up with almost anything temporarily, so long as it is going to improve your condition permanently.

R. (Schenectady) writes: "A few weeks ago I had some pictures taken, together with another young lady, but as they did not suit we did not take them; and, as I afterward learned, the photographer finished them, and they did him no credit, for they were not good. A gentleman acquaintance visiting the gallery a short time after they were finished, took one without the artist's knowledge—by his own statement. He refuses to give the picture to us, on the ground that he did not receive it from either my friend or myself, and he will not return it to the gallery. What do you think of his conduct? And is there any way for us to get the picture?" He had no right to take the picture without the artist's consent, and the artist had no right to let him have it without your consent. It is the duty of the artist to compel him to return it.

JOSEPHUS (New York) writes: "I thought I would go to you for advice regarding a complaint of my own: it is my extreme bashfulness when in the company of young ladies. I am considered by young men of my own age to be a clever fellow, well informed on general topics, and a good talker; but when I am in the society of ladies, especially young ones, I seem to become perfectly dumb. Now, you know, this is a very uncomfortable feeling, especially if I am in company with a person in whose opinion I would like to be held in as favorable a light as possible. I hope you will inform me of a remedy, if any, for this extreme bashfulness." Get in the habit of talking with one young lady without embarrassment, and you will soon overcome your bashfulness, in a great measure, as to others.

C. S. (Boston) writes: "I am forty-three years old, and have a piano for the first time. Do you think I am too old to learn to play? I know all the notes and have a good chance to learn. I look a great deal younger than I am, but I do not want to be laughed at for taking lessons. I think in a year I should be able to play a few tunes." You are not too old to try; neither, if you have a natural ear for music, are you too old to learn. At one time the best Greek scholar in the Senate of the United States never knew a word of Greek until he was over fifty.

ADA H. (Michigan) writes: "There is a young gentleman who comes to see me. I like him very much, and I know that my love is returned; but mamma is opposed to him because he smokes and chews. He says he will stop, for my sake. Shall I give him up, or not?" Why should you give him up on account of his using tobacco, when he offers to leave it off? If you think his fulfillment of this promise is essential to your happiness, why not put him to the test, and require him to do it at once?

GREENY says: "Will you be kind enough to inform me who, what, or where Dolly Varden is? As all the spring styles are Dolly Varden, I should like to know what it means." Dolly Varden is a pleasant creation of the brain of Charles Dickens.

IOLA (Lancaster, Pa.) asks: "What is the meaning of '*Sic semper tyrannis*,' the motto of Virginia?" "Thus always to tyrants," is the literal translation of the Latin motto of the State of Virginia: *Sic semper tyrannis.*

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*